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PERCEPTIONS ON THE SOCIAL STATUS OF PAPIAMENTU IN
CONTRAST TO ITS OFFICIAL SIGNIFICANCE IN ARUBA AND CURAÇAO

by

KEISHA IRMA WIEL
B.A. University of North Florida, 2007

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ABSTRACT

Many creole languages have been studied by linguists and anthropologists alike in order to gain a better understanding as to their formations and social status within their respective cultures. Theories such as the Language Bioprogram hypothesis created by Derek Bickerton researched explicitly the genesis of creoles, primarily the creoles in Guyana and Hawai'i. Although many creole languages are the main vernaculars of many cultures, they are often seen as having a lower status than the official language, usually a European language.

Papiamentu, a language spoken in Aruba, Curaçao, and Bonaire, has carried a prestige that many other creoles do not possess; it is spoken by everyone on the islands. There are no class divides that determine what, when, and where the language can be used. It is accepted by the majority on the islands and has gained the status as an official language in March 2003 in Aruba and in March 2007 in Curaçao and Bonaire. Although it encompasses this status, Papiamentu is still not accepted in every faction on the islands. It is not the language of instruction in the educational system and official government documentation is still written in Dutch.

This research explored the issues of Papiamentu's social status on the islands and has correlated it to its use in several sectors in Aruba and Curaçao. Primary research was carried in Aruba and Curaçao for six weeks. Interviews along with participant-observation tackled issues such as Papiamentu's presence in education, how Papiamentu was used during childhood, Papiamentu in relation to other languages on the islands, and the use of Papiamentu within the media. This research was executed to acquire a better insight into the perceptions of Papiamentu's social status and whether these perspectives have a profound effect on its usage.

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Ygmar and Villana Wiel, for instilling their culture and especially the language Papiamentu in me.

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INTRODUCTION

As a result of centuries of contact between African, European, Asian, and indigenous people, the Caribbean is home to a variety of creole languages. By and large, these languages are lexically based on the language of the colonizer. Because they are usually so similar to the European language, these creoles often do not receive the same prestige as the colonizer's language. There is often a divide as to which speech to use. Usually, the language of the colonizer will be chosen as the proper way to speak while the creole is usually used to facilitate communication in informal settings. A class divide often accompanies the use of the different forms of colloquial speech with the elitists typically speaking the official languages, which are usually the colonizer's language, and the lower classes speaking the creoles. This can habitually set the perception of both languages as to which one is the better choice. In her article, "Language Use, Language Attitudes and Identity among Papiamentu Speakers," Hélène Garrett states, "The difficult predicament of diglossia, which for speakers usually means being torn between two languages, one with more prestige than the other, is what often shapes attitudes towards the less prestigious language" (Garrett 2008:27). These attitudes can often have a negative impact on the less prominent dialect.

Papiamentu is a creole language spoken on the islands of Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao, also known as the ABC islands. With less than 350,000 speakers, Papiamentu remains the smallest creole to become an official language in the Caribbean. Papiamentu's lexicon is comprised of five European languages: Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, English, and minimal French although the majority of words are of Spanish, Portuguese, and Ladino¹ origin. Because of the strong similarities between the latter three languages, some words in Papiamentu cannot

¹ Ladino is a Spanish-Hebrew language spoken virtually only by Sephardic Jews.

be traced to just one language. There are also lexical origins from African languages such as Twi (Ghana), Yoruba (Nigeria), Mandinga (Guinea Bissau), and Kimbundu (Angola) and from the language of the Arawak Indians. The imprint of the Arawak language is primarily in names of locations and flora. There is one commonly used word in Papiamentu that stemmed from the language of the Arawaks. The word *tata* (father) originates from *tayta* (father) in the Arawak language.

The syntax of Papiamentu, on the other hand, is mainly derived from the African vernaculars. For example, the suffix *-nan*, literally translates to *them* the plural marker for Papiamentu. The syntax from other creoles in the Caribbean also follows African syntax rules. On other Caribbean islands, the third person plural also marks the plural marker. For instance, in Caribbean English Patois, the plural marker is *-dem* (them). In Haitian Kreyòl, the plural marker is *-yo* (them). It is purported that this type of plural marker is derived from Twi (Martinus 2004: 258).

Although the core grammar comes from languages such as Twi and Yoruba, there are new syntactical borrowings from Spanish. For example, one of the borrowings from Spanish is the suffix *-endo* which indicates the present participle. While this is not considered correct grammar in Papiamentu, many speakers of the language use it habitually. For instance, the grammatically correct phrase *mi ta bai kas* (I am going home) will turn into *mi ta bayendo kas*. Although the latter is technically incorrect, it is becoming accepted on all the islands.

Papiamentu is the main language spoken on Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao. As of the 2000 census in Aruba, 69.4 percent of the households indicate Papiamentu as their primary language. Similarly, in the 2001 census in Bonaire, 72.3 percent of the households spoke Papiamentu as the main language while the percentage for Curaçao was 80.3 percent. Recently,

however, there has been a decline of Papiamentu speakers on the islands due to immigration and emigration. Since the economy is mainly based on tourism, there has been an influx of immigrants, largely from Latin American countries such as Colombia and Venezuela, who come to work in the hotel industry. According to the census, in twenty years, the percentage of Spanish speaking households in Aruba increased from 3.1 percent to 13.2 percent. Emigration from the islands is high as well since many students leave to further their education at the university level in the Netherlands and to a minor extent the United States. There are many students who do not come back to the islands opting instead to stay in the Netherlands or the United States for job opportunities.

Brief History of the ABC Islands

The first inhabitants to occupy the islands were the Caquetio Indians, who are said to have come from the mainland of South America through Venezuela. They were part of the Arawak indigenous group. In 1499, Alonso de Ojeda, a Spaniard, and Amerigo Vespucci, an Italian, were the first Europeans to arrive in Aruba, Curaçao, and Bonaire. They came under the authority of the Spanish crown. By 1513, the ABC islands were proclaimed *islas inútiles* (useless islands) by Diego Colon viceroy of Hispaniola. They were called useless islands due to the lack of precious metals that were found on the island. As a result, the Spanish took the entire Arawak population on the islands and sent them to Hispaniola. The three islands were barren until 1526 when Juan de Ampués received permission from King Charles V of the Holy Roman Empire to repopulate the islands. African slaves were initially brought to the islands that same year. The islands came under the control of the Spanish crown shortly after and additional colonization was prohibited. From this period until 1634, when the Dutch colonized the islands,

Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao were constantly under attack by French and English pirates (Martinus 2004:3).

Once the Dutch colonized the islands, they expelled all remaining Spaniards and most of the Arawaks from Curaçao. Only seventy-five Arawaks remained on the island (Martinus 2004:4). The ABC islands took divergent paths from this point on. Bonaire became a plantation island, due to an abundance of salt, and slaves were brought in to harvest salt from the saltpans. The slave quarters, built too low for a person to stand, still remain on the island today. Aruba, the only island to retain most of the Arawak people, mainly became settlements of cattle ranches that the Arawak worked on. The few slaves on the island were brought by the Dutch who came to live. At the time of emancipation, four hundred slaves were freed in Aruba.

Curaçao, which was the biggest of the three islands, became the central point for the Dutch. After acquiring the Windward Islands: St. Maarten, Saba, and St. Eustatius, the Dutch established the Dutch West India Company in Curaçao. The six islands became known as the Netherlands Antilles with Curaçao being the location where the Dutch set up their base. Curaçao became a slave trading post, and by the 1600s, it became one of the most significant slave trading depots in the Caribbean.

Around the mid 1600s, numerous Sephardic Jews arrived in Curaçao and created a prominent community on the island. Primarily from the Netherlands and the northern part of Brazil, they became merchants in the main city, Willemstad, and farmers throughout the countryside. The first remnants of their presence on the island can still be seen in Curaçao. *Mikvé Israel* (Hope of Israel) is the oldest synagogue in the Western hemisphere that is still in use (Fouse 2002:112).

By 1795, the Dutch were using Curaçao as their main trading post. There were a significant number of plantations on the island. Plantations largely served to feed the population on the island. Curaçao had no main cash crop that was exported. It was in this year that Tula, a slave on the Kenepa plantation, would begin an uprising and revolt. Tula along with Bastiaan Carpata, a slave from another plantation, marched from Kenepa plantation, which is on the northwest side of the island, all the way to Willemstad, which is situated in the middle of the western part of the island. As they walked, more slaves accompanied them. After hearing about the success of the Haitian revolution, they were hoping, too, to revolt and become freed. Unfortunately, Tula and the slaves were stopped by the Dutch military. Slaves who promised to return to their plantations were given pardons. Other slaves, who were identified as leaders or had killed a white person in the process, were scheduled to die. Tula, the leader, was burned in the face with a torch and then beheaded. Bastiaan Carpata was forced to watch Tula's death and then received the same fate. Others were either hanged or suffered a worse fate. It is unclear, what that fate would be. The bodies of the executed slaves were thrown into the ocean and Carpata's and Tula's heads were put on display to show the consequences of their defiance (Fouse 2002:71-74). What is remarkable is that their deaths were well documented since it was legal to perform these actions. Today, a monument celebrating Tula's efforts stands in the place where he was executed. Enslaved people were emancipated in the Netherlands Antilles in 1863.

Not much is said about what took place after Emancipation. One point that is mentioned is that former slaves would gain some sort of identity by receiving new family names. One method that was popular in Curaçao was to take a person's maternal grandmother's first name and make it the family name. This is why many people in Curaçao have last names such as *Maria* and *Rosina*. Another method used was to take the surname of the slave owner and reverse

it. For instance, *Ellis* would become *Sille*. Similarly, some family names were taken and converted to something similar. For instance, *Martinez* would become *Martinus*. Biracial offspring were given family names of the slave owner based on the conversion method. Examples of this include *Oduber* becoming *Dubero* and *Elsevier* becoming *Elsevijf*.² The third method, which was frequently utilized in Bonaire, was to take a characteristic of the person and make it their last name. For instance, someone could get the surname *Vriend* (friend) (Fouse 2002:65).

By the 1920s, oil was discovered in Venezuela and, because of their proximity, oil refineries were set up in Aruba and Curaçao. Lago Oil & Transport Company, which was a subsidiary of Standard Oil of New Jersey (Exxon), was set up on Aruba in San Nicolaas. Royal Dutch Shell was set up on Curaçao in the capital city, Willemstad. Royal Dutch Shell also created its subsidiary in Curaçao, Eagle Oil (Fouse 2002:145). The oil refineries on both islands drastically changed the economies of Aruba and Curaçao. Due to the massive amounts of workers needed, people from all over the Caribbean came to work in the refineries. Although San Nicolaas was not the capital of Aruba, it became the main city on the island. The workers lived in San Nicolaas and their children were educated there. The main street also blossomed with new merchant shops. Because Lago was a part of Standard Oil of New Jersey, many Americans also moved to Aruba. They, however, did not live in San Nicolaas; they lived in what was referred to as Lago Colony or simply as The Colony, a community located with the refinery near San Nicolaas. The Colony had its own school, hospital, club house, and even a bowling alley. There was another town that was situated between Lago Colony and San Nicolaas. The town, known as Lago Heights, was where the upper management, who were from the island, lived. They also had their own social club, but their children went to school in San Nicolaas.

² In relation to Elsevier and Elsevijf, *vier* means four while *vijf* means five.

Shell, on the other hand, was in the capital city, Willemstad. Workers who came to the island from other Caribbean islands integrated easily into Otrobanda (neighborhood in Willemstad). In contrast to Aruba, however, many more Dutch workers went to Curaçao than workers from the English Caribbean. Papiamentu played a prevalent role in distinguishing the Dutch who were born on the island from the Dutch who came from The Netherlands. By speaking Papiamentu, the Dutch were perceived as locals rather than foreigners. By the mid-1980s, both refineries were shut down and sold to other companies.

By 1954, the six islands that constituted the Netherlands Antilles (Bonaire, Curaçao, Saba, St. Maarten, and St. Eustatius) became an autonomous country within the kingdom of the Netherlands. This lessened their role as colonial entities and gave them independent power over their own affairs with the exception of foreign affairs and national defense, which the Netherlands still controlled. Becoming autonomous served to strengthen the self-identity of the Netherlands Antilles. During the 1960s, several well known scholars returned to the islands and applied their thoughts on cultural identity on the islands. By writing and talking about their ideas on culture and Papiamentu, this led up to one of the biggest uprisings on the islands since the Tula revolution.

On May 30, 1969, there were labor disputes between Curaçao Federation of Workers (C.F.W.) and Werkspoor Caribbean Company commonly known as WESCAR. One of the initial disputes centered on wages. Non-Antilleans who came from other Caribbean islands were being paid more by WESCAR than Antilleans as compensation for leaving their home countries. Also, workers who were employed by WESCAR were receiving less pay than Shell Workers (Anderson and Dynes 1972:344). Shell contracted WESCAR to do work in the refinery. To do the work, WESCAR employed C.F.W. workers. C.F.W. was a union. WESCAR was an

independent contractor. C.F.W. workers were unhappy with the conditions under which they were employed by WESCAR. This led to the initial strikes at Shell. Antilleans argued that it was unfair that they had to receive lower wages simply because they were from the island. They performed the same labor and had the same required skills as other workers employed by WESCAR and C.F.W. The events quickly turned political as the leader of the C.F.W., Papa Godett, urged the workers to march to Fort Amsterdam in protest. Fort Amsterdam, which was situated in Punda, a commercial district in Willemstad, was the location of the parliament. The protest was intended to be used as a means to overthrow the government (Anderson and Dynes 1972:343). As the protesters marched through the Otrobanda side of Willemstad into Punda, looting and vandalism ensued. As the police came to quell the protest, Papa Godett was shot and wounded, leading to an escalation of the situation. By the end of the protest a great number of stores had been looted and sent up in flames. Many of the historic buildings in Punda were badly damaged by the fires. This event highlighted the importance that identification as a Curaçaoan had gained. Many of the stores that burned down were owned by Ashkenazi Jews who had recently moved to island. The stores owned by the Sephardic Jews were left untouched. Also, there was a dichotomy between the Dutch who were born on the island as opposed to the Dutch who came from Holland. The Curaçao-born Dutch used Papiamentu as an identity marker. Once they were identified as Antilleans and not Dutch they were left unharmed. There are also accounts of various Black Curaçaoans escorting White tourists back to their hotels so they would not be mistaken for the Dutch who worked on the islands (Fouse 2002:150). At the end of the riots of May 30, 1969 the government resigned and the first Black Prime Minister, Ernesto Petronia was elected to office.

Cultural identity became an important factor for many Arubans and Curaçaoans. By the 1980s Aruba was vying to become a separate country within the Kingdom of the Netherlands. On January 1, 1986, Aruba attained *Status Aparte* (apart status), which separated it from the Netherlands Antilles. Along with the *Status Aparte*, Aruba gained all the attributes that the Netherlands Antilles had, such as autonomous control over all affairs except for foreign affairs and national defense. Aruba was slated to become fully independent in 1996, but efforts were halted by then Prime Minister Nelson Oduber, and Aruba remained a sovereign country within the Kingdom of the Netherlands. On October 10, 2010, the Netherlands Antilles is slated to be dissolved. Curaçao and St. Maarten will obtain *Status Aparte* within the Kingdom of the Netherlands while Bonaire, St. Eustatius, and Saba will become special municipalities directly tied to The Netherlands as a part of the Dutch province of Noord-Holland.

History of Papiamentu

There are different theories about the formation of Papiamentu. These theories include: the first Spanish hypothesis, the second Spanish hypothesis, the Language Bioprogram hypothesis, Brazilian creole theory, and the Proto-Afro-Portuguese hypothesis. The first Spanish hypothesis created by Italian Emilio Teza states that Papiamentu descended only from Spanish. The only research tool that Teza had available was a Roman Catholic Prayer book entitled *Catecismo pa uso di catholicanan di Curaçao* (Catechism for use by Catholics of Curaçao). He noted that Papiamentu was a form of corrupted Spanish with African influence. The second Spanish hypothesis was spearheaded by Uruguayan linguist José Pedro Rona. He stated that Papiamentu does have an African connection with Spanish and not Portuguese language influences. His argument was that Papiamentu had mainly been evaluated against modern

Spanish and modern Portuguese, not the Spanish and Portuguese that had been spoken at the time of Papiamentu's formation. He also notes that Papiamentu was not measured against the different dialects of Spanish that are spoken. Although these are valid arguments, some of his data was incorrect. For instance, his data on Papiamentu include words such as *kwere* (2004: 24). There is no such word found in Papiamentu. He also makes no mention of the similarities between Cape Verdean Creole and the creole spoken in Guinea-Bissau against Papiamentu. Teza's hypothesis was first realized in the mid-1800s while Rona's argument was generated in the 1970s.

The Brazilian creole hypothesis was created by Morris Goodman and it stated that Papiamentu, along with Saramaccan³, was formed with a Brazilian Portuguese influence. He proclaims that this was due to through the migration of the Sephardic Jews from Brazil to Suriname and Curaçao. He also claims that several assistants of Brazilian officials came to serve in Curaçao with their superiors and along with them, brought their Portuguese vernacular. He presents no linguistic data for Papiamentu and contains only two proverbs in Saramaccan (Martinus 2004:16-17).

The Language Bioprogram hypothesis was created by linguist Derek Bickerton and it affirms that all creoles were formed through a similar process. According to Bickerton, children are solely exposed to the pidgin that was spoken by their parents. Through their own accord, they are able to transform this pidgin into a creole with a substantially structured grammar. Because this capability is present in all children, all creoles, including creoles not from the Caribbean, are formed in this manner. Efraim Frank Martinus presents an extensive review of the Language Bioprogram Hypothesis and its relation to Papiamentu in his book "The Kiss of a Slave: Papiamentu's West African Connections".

³ Saramaccan is a creole language spoken in Suriname and parts of French Guiana.

The hypothesis that receives the most recognition in the studies of Papiamentu is the Proto-Afro-Portuguese hypothesis. This hypothesis states that all creole languages in the Caribbean began as a Portuguese creole on the West Coast of Africa. Once the people who spoke this creole reached their respective islands, relexification occurred, with the lexicon deriving from the language of the particular European colonizer. There were several explanations as to why a Portuguese creole could have emerged. Slaves were held in *depositos* (deposits- similar to Native American reservations) while waiting to be sold (Martinus 2004:125-126). These *depositos* became a kind of commune where slaves grew their own food while they awaited departure. There were peoples from different parts of Africa that were held in these *depositos* who did not speak common languages. In order to communicate with others and with the Europeans, a Portuguese creole was created. Other Europeans such as the Dutch had a comprehensive knowledge of this language as well.

Religion played a big role in the use of the Portuguese creole. All the slaves that were held at the slave trade posts, such as the Elmina fort in Ghana and forts in Cape Verde were ordered to be *ladinized* (baptized) before the departure from Africa.⁴ This increased the selling price of the slave which turned out economically better for both the Catholic Church as well as the European slave traders. The Church received a tax on every slave that was baptized (Martinus 2004:127-128). Catechists were also required to learn and have fully fluency in the vernacular of the slaves. Because of this, Portuguese creole became the primary language of the forts in West Africa and children who were born in the *depositos* grew up speaking Portuguese creole as their mother tongue. As the enslaved people were taken to the different islands of the Caribbean, the grammar of the different African languages was retained while the lexicon was changed due to the presence of other European languages such as English.

⁴ The slaves would be lined up on the beach and collectively be baptized by catechists.

There were reasons why Papiamentu did not change from a Portuguese based creole to a Dutch based creole, even though the colonizers of the ABC islands were Dutch. One major difference was that, unlike the other Caribbean islands, the Dutch did not want their slaves to know the Dutch language. Since many Dutch merchants knew the Portuguese creole, they regularly spoke it with the enslaved. The Sephardic Jewish residents in these islands also had a prominent role in retaining the Portuguese elements of Papiamentu. Most of them came from Holland by way of Portugal, Spain or Brazil. The Catholic Spanish missionaries also knew this Portuguese creole since they were required to learn the mother tongue of the enslaved, which had become Papiamentu.

Since the Sephardic Jews came from Spanish or Portuguese speaking countries, it was easy for them to assimilate into speaking the Papiamentu language. The Sephardic Jews who came from the Netherlands did not speak Dutch (Fouse 2002:114). Once they arrived on the islands, primarily settling on Curaçao, they became prominent merchants in the main city of Willemstad, particularly in the neighborhood of Punda. They adapted to the language that their customers spoke, which by the 1700s was evolving into Papiamentu. Although they did not create an orthography for Papiamentu, the Jews were also one of the first groups to write in Papiamentu. The earliest document to be written in Papiamentu dates back to 1775. This document written by an unidentified Curaçaoan Jew was a letter written from a man to his wife. It is interesting to note that although there was not an official orthography present, he did not hesitate to use a phonological version of Papiamentu (Martinus 2004:9-10). The Papiamentu used in the text is strikingly similar to modern, written Papiamentu, although there are few words that are visibly from Portuguese.

The Spanish missionaries on the islands also spoke Papiamentu, but it was heavily tinged with Spanish. They took initial interest in the spiritual needs of the slaves and improving their condition. In Aruba, this was also done for the Arawak who were working at the cattle ranches on the island. In addition to being unwilling to share their Dutch language, the Dutch did not want the slaves or the Arawaks to practice their Protestant religion. This made it possible for the Spanish missionaries to convert any remaining non-Christian African slaves or Arawaks. The missionaries were also pioneers in creating texts in Papiamentu. The earliest known printed texts are Catechism books. Since the missionaries were in charge of education, teaching was conducted in Papiamentu. Catechism books were used as textbooks by the enslaved. Presently, the Catholic educational system predominates on the island. It is also interesting to note that in contrast to their historical stance on Papiamentu, the Catholic educational system is presently one of the leading proponents of maintaining Dutch as the language of instruction in education.

There was another language being spoken on the island of Curaçao. Guene was another creole language spoken there exclusively by the slaves. Although, its exact origins are unknown, it is purported to come from the West Coast of Africa. It is not certain whether this language was spoken by the enslaved in Bonaire and Aruba. This vernacular no longer exists as a spoken language and is now only seen in folkloric songs.

There are explanations as to why Papiamentu has survived while Guene is now an extinct language. The main reason can be attributed to usage. Papiamentu gained prestige over Guene because it was used by everyone on the island while Guene was only used by the enslaved. For instance, the Jewish merchants and the Dutch spoke Papiamentu. Another reason that might explain why Guene never flourished is that Papiamentu was used in education. Before Dutch became the language of instruction in education, Papiamentu was used by the missionaries to

educate children who went to school. Once the enslaved started to communicate more in Papiamentu, they might have lost their fluency in Guene.

The relationship between Dutch and Papiamentu is different. Dutch was forcibly retained as the official language of Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao. It was not spoken socially by everyone on the islands. However, it remained the unofficial prestigious language due to its presence in the government and education. Although Dutch held this prestige, Papiamentu still continued to be the main vernacular spoken, even in Dutch homes. Martinus states, “In the beginning of the 19th century Papiamentu also replaced Dutch as the mother tongue in households of Dutch lineage” (Fouse 2004:11). By the late 1800s, Papiamentu was still the language of instruction. Father Jacobus Johannes Putman created school materials in Papiamentu and there was also a newspaper named *Civilisadó* (*The Civilizer*), published in Papiamentu in 1871. It is fascinating that, although there was not a standard orthography for Papiamentu at that time, all of these materials were still being published and distributed throughout Curaçao.

Presently Papiamentu still struggles to gain recognition as a legitimate language for use in the educational system. Papiamentu was only introduced into the school system in the mid-1980s in Curaçao and Bonaire and in the late 1990s in Aruba. It is taught as a subject in primary, secondary, and tertiary education, but it is not the language of instruction. In the government, Papiamentu is used in all facets except for official government documents and in official court proceedings that deal with The Netherlands. Papiamentu, however, is used in meetings conducted by the government and other court proceedings that do not deal with The Netherlands. It is seen as a language of distinction, yet it is not seen as standard enough to be used as the language of instruction in education or on official government documents.

Papiamentu has two official orthographies: an etymological orthography⁵ in Aruba and a phonological orthography⁶ in Curaçao and Bonaire (See Table 2 in Appendix). Papiamentu became an official language in March 2003 in Aruba, joining the other official language, Dutch, but Papiamentu did not become an official language in Curaçao and Bonaire until March 2007. Because Curaçao is still part of the Netherlands Antilles, Papiamentu became an official language alongside English and Dutch. English became an official language in the Netherlands Antilles because it is largely used on the Windward Islands of Saba, St. Maarten, and St. Eustatius.

Research Objective

This research explored the issues of Papiamentu's social status on the islands and has correlated it to its use in several sectors in Aruba and Curaçao. Interviews along with participant-observation tackled issues such as Papiamentu's presence in education, identity through Papiamentu, and the use of Papiamentu within the media. These areas were chosen, rather than areas such as sports and religion, because the most prevalent issues dealt with these areas. For instance, there are various opinions on how Papiamentu should be incorporated into the educational system. Also, Papiamentu is seen as an essential part of the cultural identity among Arubans and Curaçaoans. This research was executed to acquire a better insight into the perceptions of Papiamentu's social status and whether these perspectives have a profound effect on its usage.

⁵ An etymological orthography uses the origin of the word for the basis of its spelling.

⁶ A phonological orthography spells the word according to its sound.

Methodology

There are different sub-disciplines of anthropology that can be studied. The four main fields include: linguistics, cultural anthropology, archaeology, and biological anthropology. Other fields include applied anthropology and native anthropology. Native anthropology is a field of anthropology that allows as emic (insider) perspective of a culture. It is sometimes seen as a means to gain a better perspective on the culture because the researcher originates from that particular culture. There are also problems posed with being a native anthropologist, however, for instance, because the person is from that culture, there might be some personal agendas attached to the project that leave the anthropologist subjective rather than objective. Although every anthropologist is not completely objective, native anthropologists pose the increased risk of having skewed observations on the entity that they are studying because they are a part of that culture. Conducting research from the perspective of a native anthropologist is also difficult because of the expectations that are self inflicted in the desire to represent the culture as honestly as possible without being biased.

My position as a native anthropologist on this research project is complicated. Although I was not born on either Aruba or Curaçao and had not lived primarily on the islands, I speak the language and visit both islands extensively. I possess dual citizenship, American and Dutch, and still have family members present on both Aruba and Curaçao. When on the islands, I am seen by residents as a local until I express that I was born and raised in the United States. Being recognized as a local was an advantage in gaining rapport with the study participants. Many participants agreed to be a part of the study simply due to the fact that I was an American trying to gain more knowledge about my heritage. Many participants noted that they thought it was great that not only would I be able to use this study to gain a better insight into what Arubans and

Curaçaoans perceive about their language, but also help me to gain a better understanding of myself.

My initial interest in choosing this topic had to do with my background. Both of my parents are from the islands of Aruba and Curaçao and I grew up speaking Papiamentu and English concurrently. I never noticed the importance that Papiamentu had until I was in college and was introduced formally to different creoles, Papiamentu being one of them. These creoles were portrayed not as a broken dialect of a standardized language, but as languages that had their own merit. I started to explore the history of Papiamentu as well as the linguistic characteristics that made up the language. For example, because I was never taught how to write Papiamentu and, up until that point, I had never seen any uniform orthography, I would scribble in my notebook different ways to write the lexicon of Papiamentu. I also started to notice a phenomenon that was long present on the islands, the majority schools were taught in Dutch. When I would ask why this was so prevalent, several people told me that most students went to the Netherlands for tertiary education so it was logical for them to be taught in Dutch rather than Papiamentu. I thought it was a plausible reason, but I felt that there were deeper meanings behind why Dutch had a higher prestige over Papiamentu. After delving into the history of the ABC islands, I decided to research the perception of Papiamentu held by its speakers in order to gain a better understanding of why the most commonly spoken mother tongue Papiamentu, had less status than Dutch in education and government.

The initial literature review focused on the perception of Papiamentu by its users. During my initial search I found that there were not many studies done specifically, on the perception of Papiamentu by its users. I searched the main databases at the library of the University of Central Florida and I explored on Google Scholar for articles that pertained to my topic. I realized that I

had to modify my search. Instead of searching specifically for perceptions on Papiamentu, I researched broader terms such as Papiamentu use. I also explored specific topics such as Papiamentu use in education and identity and Papiamentu. Since these themes were the most prevalent on the subject of Papiamentu, I was able to obtain more articles. There were some minor barriers. There were a few articles that were published in Dutch and Spanish. While I can read some Spanish, I had no fluency in Dutch. With some help from some Dutch-speaking friends and a web translator, I was able to translate the articles and acquire new information.

After completing the literature review, I wrote my proposal for submission to the IRB (Institutional Review Board); it was approved in July 2009. During the summer of 2009, I spent a total of six weeks on the islands of Aruba and Curaçao, three weeks in Aruba and three weeks in Curaçao. No research was conducted in Bonaire because of the limited contacts and time for the project.

The interviewees were chosen through a convenience sample. In order to acquire this convenience sample I first asked people that I knew to be a part of the study. Afterward, they would refer me to people that they thought might be interested in the study. The sample of thirty-two people consisted of males and females of different financial backgrounds from the ages of 19-81, including teachers, journalists, homemakers, students, and artisans (See Table 1 in Appendix). I was only able to interview this small sample due to the limited amount of time that I had on both islands.

There were two types of anthropological methods employed in the data collection. The first method that was used was conducting semi-structured interviews. The second was a formal questionnaire. After reviewing this data, I conducted further inquiry on a variety of topics. Issues that were investigated included Papiamentu's presence in education, how Papiamentu was

used during childhood, and the use of Papiamentu within the media. These issues were important since they are the major cultural venues where Papiamentu is utilized. For instance, Papiamentu within the media was a significant topic because this was the main medium where people heard the official Papiamentu. There were various people who looked to the media such as radio and the newspapers to learn how to correctly spell and speak Papiamentu. The topic on Papiamentu use during their upbringing was noteworthy because it related to culture and identity. How and when they used it determined whether it was viewed favorably. Papiamentu's place within the educational system was the most prevalent theme and it generated the most response. Presently, Dutch is the language of instruction for most schools in Aruba and Curaçao. The use of Papiamentu within the school system was viewed as significant because this determined how they viewed the level of success for their children.

Participant-observation was also conducted in addition to interviewing. Since I speak the language fluently, it was easy for me to communicate with the locals on both islands. I participated by conversing with different people about their daily lives. Once it became known through friends and family that I was on the islands conducting research about the Papiamentu language, numerous locals sought me out to express their thoughts on Papiamentu. In my fieldnotes I recorded the observation that almost everyone considers themselves to be an expert on the subject of Papiamentu. The observations that I made on the islands included watching how locals interacted in their daily routines, such as going to the market, interacting with others at the local restaurant/bar, and listening to conversations that were held amongst friends and families members. Not only were there observations of speech patterns, but on gestures as well. Many participants noted that they liked Papiamentu because it was much easier to express emotions.

Once the interviews and the participant-observations were completed, transcribing the interviews began. Since the interviews were conducted in English and Papiamentu, I purchased and installed Spell Check software for Papiamentu. There were some initial problems when the transcriptions were being done. Since many consultants intertwined Papiamentu with other languages: Dutch, Spanish, and English, it was difficult to comprehend what some participants were saying. My primary language is English and I have conversational skills in Spanish, but I have no fluency in Dutch. In transcriptions, I would spell the word according to how I thought it would be spelled, and then I would either correspond with someone who spoke Dutch or search the internet for the meaning. For instance, if I knew the participant was talking about education, I would search on Wikipedia Dutch education and correlate the word with the article. The success rate varied.

The Papiamentu Spell Check software did not check for grammar, solely for misspelled words. Also, the use of contractions is popular in Papiamentu but there were some contractions that were not present in the software. In addition, the suffix *-le* was added to many words in the speech patterns of several participants, but it is virtually absent in the Papiamentu Spell Check. Although the word *ele* (him/her) is present in Papiamentu, the elision of this word only occurs during spoken Papiamentu but in the written form it is virtually absent.

Analysis Strategy

Once the transcriptions were completed, I began the data analysis. Initially, coding was done based on the questions that were posed. From there, each question was broken down according to themes. Some of these themes included usage of other languages in Papiamentu,

how Papiamentu was used in education before it was introduced and after it was introduced in schools, and the debate about which version, Papiamentu or Papiamento was correct.

Data analysis was also done on the participant-observation that I had personally recorded. I analyzed field notes from my notebook and coded them into the themes previously mentioned. This data was contrasted with the data from the interviews that were conducted with the participants. This was done to note the differences and similarities between what the consultants said and what was observed.

Thesis Outline

Through cross analysis between the literature review, participant-observation, and interviews, this thesis will provide insight into the perception of Papiamentu by its users and whether these perceptions have had an effect on its development and usage as a language. The thesis explores major themes that were prevalent throughout the study including, Papiamentu's presence in education, how Papiamentu was used during adolescence, language as a major component of self identity, and the use of Papiamentu within the media. The final chapter will be the concluding thoughts as well as any lingering questions that might still be present.

Chapter two will discuss the relationship between Papiamentu and other Caribbean languages, such as Haitian Kreyòl. Another topic that also will be explored is the relationship to other languages present on the island. This includes whether Papiamentu is spoken more often and the level of prestige that it has in relation to the other languages. The last issue that will be explored is the presence of elements from other languages in Papiamentu, specifically Dutch, Spanish and English. Recently there has been a heavy influx of lexical borrowings from these

three languages into Papiamentu. Usually several words that could be found in Papiamentu are now increasingly being substituted for a word from Dutch, Spanish, or English.

Chapter three considers the subject of identity and how it correlates to Papiamentu. Since Papiamentu is only spoken on three islands, the language became a source of cultural identity primarily on Aruba and Curaçao. Since I did not conduct any research work on Bonaire, my conclusions do not extend to that island. Cultural identity is never more present than in the Papiamentu versus Papiamento debate. Aruba opted to use an etymological orthography and thus spells the name of the language with an <o>, Papiamento. Curaçao selected to use a phonological orthography and as a result spells the name of the language with a <u>, Papiamentu. This debate will be discussed in a later chapter. This debate is one of the biggest issues on both islands because it not only defines who they are, but it deals with the politics that played a role in creating the two separate orthographies. Because Curaçao has created a Spell Check for Microsoft Word, I will be using the orthography set employed in Curaçao. Another issue that will be explored is the usage of Dutch versus the usage of Papiamentu and how both are used in accordance to situational usage. Matters such as the different styles of speaking Papiamentu and the use of Papiamentu during adolescence will also be explored. Since Papiamentu is the main language spoken on three different islands, there are two styles of Papiamentu. One topic that was fairly surprising was the usage of Papiamentu in relation to the cultural identity of immigrants on the island. What will be investigated is how Papiamentu is used to give them a sense of belonging.

Chapter four discusses the issue of education and Papiamentu. The educational system on the ABC islands uses Dutch for the language of instruction, Papiamentu still plays a role. This chapter will be exploring the use of Papiamentu within the educational system as well

as the history of its usage. One prevalent issue is Papiamentu use in the educational system.

Since parents have a significant amount of control as to which vernacular can become the language of instruction, it was fascinating to see their opinions of Papiamentu use in education.

Chapter five examines Papiamentu usage within the media, the most prevalent venue for Papiamentu. A major subject of this theme is the level of command in speaking Papiamentu. Given that a copious number of people watch television, read newspapers, and listen to the radio every day there is a certain level of mastery that is expected in the media. This leads into the final matter of this theme which is the use of the media as a vehicle to educate the public. This was another surprising topic because it had never occurred to me that the media served as a role model for the proper way to speak and write proper Papiamentu. This topic was a prevalent issue in the interviews because there are still people who are unclear as to how to write proper Papiamentu.

The last chapter, the conclusion, contains my concluding thoughts on the topic as well as the concluding thoughts from my consultants on the research. It will tie in together all of themes that are present in the thesis and how it compares to its official significance as a language. Papiamentu has a high social status in some aspects of society but there is room for improvement in its official status. This last chapter will also highlight any lingering questions that may be posed.

CHAPTER ONE: LITERATURE REVIEW

Creole languages can be attributed to identity and issues of race and class. Historically, in comparison to European languages, creole languages were not viewed not as actual languages but rather, broken forms of their lexifiers' language, such as Jamaican Patois being called broken English. There has also been a level of prestige that has been associated with European languages in comparison to creole languages. There was a perception of being highly educated if a European language such as Portuguese or English was spoken rather than the creole. But in contrast to their lexifier's language, creole languages are seen as an integral part of culture. Not only can speakers of creole languages feel a sense of national pride, but they can also accredit their creole identity to their language since it is one of the main identifying markers in culture.

Creole languages around the world resulted from the contact between European colonizers and the indigenous people who inhabited the places that the Europeans colonized. In the Caribbean, enslaved people, primarily from the West Coast of Africa, were an added, integral factor to creating the creole languages that are present in the Caribbean (Mair 2007:36-37). These creoles started out as pidgins on the West Coast of Africa, which mainly combined lexicon from European languages and West African elements that became mutually intelligible between the different ethnic groups that were being held captive at the slave depots. Through this, creole languages have a specific relationship with European languages.

Creole languages, in general, were perceived as inferior to the European languages that were most similar to these creole languages. This ideology resonated in every part of the society. While the masses typically speak the creole language, it was more prestigious to speak the European language. This ideology also helped to create views on culture. European culture was considered more esteemed than the creole cultures. In the Caribbean, this was even more present

in people's sense of identity. Pre-independence, on many Caribbean islands, people could either be considered citizens of their homeland or they could be considered nationals of the European country that colonized their island. Ideologies about creole languages were formed based on the relationship between the Caribbean island and the European country. Class divisions determined which language was to be spoken. Hegemony played an important role in whether creole languages were considered inferior or not. Through this, cultural identities were formulated based on a person's language (Jeon 2005:47).

Independence is when many countries experience a resurgence of culture. By trying to distance themselves from a colonial past, many traditions that were once considered wrong are celebrated as positive aspects of culture. Through this, creole languages are considered a distinguished cultural marker. In the Caribbean, creole languages are the most distinct cultural marker. Due to the influx of different immigrants to many Caribbean islands, creole languages have become a prevalent cultural marker. Just as Crioulo has shaped the cultural identity of Cape Verdeans, creole languages in the Caribbean have helped to distinguish locals (Craig 2008:12).

Although these creole languages are prevalent cultural markers, they often receive limited use in education, if they are in education at all. Children are often taught in European languages, which at times can be difficult since it is not the primary language of the children. Peta-Gaye Mair suggests that there needs to be an awareness of creole languages in education in order to accommodate children in education (Mair: 2007:68). Programs can be initiated in order to facilitate a child's learning capacity in their own language. By developing critical language skills in their own language early on, children will be able to excel in education (Mair 2007:75).

In comparison to other Caribbean creoles, Papiamentu is different. Papiamentu does not follow the guidelines in that it does not have its roots in the hegemonic language, which in this case is the Dutch language. However, due to the high incidence of Spanish and Portuguese lexicon elements in Papiamentu, some scholars have described it either as a Spanish Creole or a Portuguese Creole. Whether or not it is considered a creole of Spanish or Portuguese has a major effect on the development of Papiamentu.

As mentioned in the introduction there is no accepted theory that suggests the origin of Papiamentu. Whether Papiamentu came to Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao via the slaves from the West Coast of Africa or from indigenous population through their contact with the Spanish, it became the primary vernacular spoken throughout the three islands. What is evident is that Papiamentu did not come directly from the Dutch but rather from the slaves who spoke a variant of a Portuguese Creole found on the West Coast of Africa. Through the captives waiting at the slave depots in Africa and through the slaves that were already present on the islands, the Dutch colonizers and later slave-owners were able to learn Papiamentu. Frank Martinus Arion notes:

Following this Papiamentu trail back to the beginning of the nineteenth century shows that the language moved from the fields into the Big Houses—not the other way around—and reveals that something completely different from the superficially apparent must have taken place in the creolization process of the Netherlands Antilles. [1998:113-114]

Once the elite started to speak Papiamentu, it became more than just a socially spoken language; it seeped into major sectors of the islands including education and commerce. Efforts to regulate the language also followed, although they were done primarily by missionaries. These missionaries created an outpour of grammar and word banks for the incoming priests and local priests learning the language. They also translated passages from the Bible and stories about saints' lives into Papiamentu in order for the slaves to access them more efficiently. Textbooks

were created by the missionaries to utilize in their schools especially after the abolition of slavery in 1863. As Iris Bachmann states:

The substantial output of texts probably led to reflections about on [sic] the spelling of Papiamentu, because in the second half of the nineteenth century, we can observe a normative effort by Bishop Ewijk to produce a more coherent orthography. He modified the strictly Dutch spelling of the early texts and took etymological considerations into account. Through word lists and a grammar, he tried to establish a spelling system that combined elements from Dutch and Spanish orthography. [2006 (Smeulders 1987):83]

Although this was not a direct act of standardization one would wonder if the process was not halted due to the restrictions on Papiamentu in education in the 1800s. Perhaps the continuing problem of creating a “correct” orthography probably would have been solved. While there are two standard orthographies, one for Aruba and one for Curaçao, there is still work to be done on aspects such as syntax and morphology (Bachmann 2008:256).

Presently, the issue of how much lexicon and syntax to take from different languages has caused major concern for the standardization of the language. Because of the overt use of the syntax and lexicon of other languages, especially Spanish, in Papiamentu, it can have a profound effect on its development. So in turn the root of the problem is not just the orthography, but in how letters are pronounced as well. The graphic representation of certain letters is not specifically defined so there is no concrete allophone for a letter like <j> for example. So for instance, the letter <j> in Dutch would be pronounced like the palatal approximant [j]. This means that in English it will sound like the letter <y> as in the word *yak*. In Spanish the phoneme /j/ would be pronounced like the voiceless glottal fricative [h] or the palatal approximant [j]. This means that it can either sound like the English <h> or like the English <y> as in *yak*. Both allophones are part of the phoneme /j/ in Papiamentu and can create confusing notions about which sound is being produced. For instance, the <j> in *kaja* can be read as either *street* or *box*. Although the phonological orthography spells *street* as *kaya* and *box* as *kaha* and the

etymological orthography spells it as *caya* and *caha*, respectively, *kaja* can still be seen in written discourse. By seeing *kaja*, it would not be clear whether the writer intended to write *box* or *street*. Also, the voiced post-alveolar affricate [dʒ] is used in Papiamentu but is customarily represented as <dj> although in few cases it might be represented as <j> such as the spelling of *djus/juice*. The different spellings of a word like *djus* can generate problems mainly for the children who are learning to read and write in primary school. They are taught to spell a word one way while their parents, who are used to following their own orthography, may spell it another way. A problem that persists is that many people still use different language codes when writing a document or letter. Even though there are efforts to regulate the orthography of Papiamentu, it is often difficult for the generation who has not received Papiamentu instruction in school to adhere to the correct orthography whether it is the Aruban or Curaçaoan orthography. In contrast to the older generation, the younger generations who are receiving Papiamentu classes in school are learning the correct orthographies of Papiamentu. In Aruba, they get the etymological orthography while in Curaçao, they receive the phonological orthography. By the early 2000s, primary schools in Aruba and Curaçao had Papiamentu as a language arts class. Through this, there is a generation of students who are able to write Papiamentu through the correct orthographies.

The issue of standardization within the orthographies presents itself mainly within the political setting. While Papiamentu has two official orthographies, neither of the orthographies are considered more prestigious than the other. Creating the two different orthographies reflected the relationship that Aruba and Curaçao had with each other, as well as to Latin America and The Netherlands. Ronald Kephart states,

There are two conflicting ideologies regarding how varieties of Creole English should be written: etymological, which is essentially conservative and focused on the relationship to

the lexifier language; and phonological, which is more radical in the sense that it is less concerned with preserving the connection to the lexifier language than with accurately representing the creole language. [Kephart 2000:35-36]

The orthographies of Aruba and Curaçao were being created around the same time that Aruba was striving to become separate from the Netherlands Antilles and specifically Curaçao. While scholars in Curaçao were generating the idea that Papiamentu's lexicon mainly derived from a Portuguese creole in Africa, some influential scholars in Aruba purported that Papiamentu mainly originated from Spanish. This is why Papiamentu was given an etymological orthography in Aruba. Curaçao, on the other hand, wanted to distance their relationship from their colonial colonizer, Holland. While Dutch played a small role in the lexicon of Papiamentu, changes were made nonetheless to make Papiamentu look less like Dutch. For instance, the word *appel* (apple) was changed to *apel* (apple). This not only further disassociated Curaçao from The Netherlands, but it also helped to create a stronger Curaçaoan identity through this creole language.

Education is a big factor when it comes to considering Papiamentu as a creole language. Because of its status as a support language in schools, meaning that teachers only use Papiamentu when they need to further explain the subject, Papiamentu can often be considered a vernacular not suitable to be the language of instruction in the educational system. Joyce Pereira (2008:175) argues that negative attitudes toward the language can not only impact the development of Papiamentu but can also affect the self-esteem and identity of many who speak the language. The dichotomy between the generations, those who were taught solely in Dutch as opposed to the generation who was taught with Papiamentu as a support language, has had profound effects on getting Papiamentu into the educational system. As mentioned in the introduction, there are high rates of repetition of grade levels in Aruba and Curaçao as well as

high dropout rates. It is mainly considered that the only factor that contributes to this decline is Papiamentu since it has been introduced into education as a language of support in Curaçao in the mid 1980s and in Aruba in the late 1990s. The difference between both of the rates often leads many to believe that Dutch should solely be the language of instruction since high rates of repetition and dropouts were uncommon in the earlier generations. Ronald Severing and Christa Weijer (2008:251) note that when Papiamentu was introduced as the language of instruction in primary education in 2003 in Curaçao, the students gained “a better grasp of the subject matter and learning to read was advancing smoother”. Even though this was a favorable outcome, the introduction of Papiamentu into primary schools came with inadequate training of teachers and materials for use. Problems arose and in 2007 the Roman Catholic school board⁷ left the decision of the language of instruction to the individual schools (Severing and Weijer 2008:252). Severing and Weijer state, “In the educational field and in the community at large, this has been considered a failure, and has done serious damage to the general perception of the effectiveness of the use of Papiamentu as a language of instruction. A positive consequence of all this is that more and more schools are becoming owners of their own educational projects” (Severing and Weijer 2008:252). The major problem was not that Papiamentu was implemented in the school system. The key dilemma was that there were not adequate educational materials that could have been used. In Curaçao, *Fundashon pa Planifikashon di Idioma*⁸ (Foundation for Language Planning) “filed for longitudinal production of learning material in Papiamentu” (2008:251) and school authorities appealed for educational materials in Papiamentu, but the appeals were unwelcomed due to disagreements over other educational reforms that were going on at that time. It is not made clear what reforms conflicted with inserting educational materials written in

⁷ The Roman Catholic school board controls the majority of the schools in Aruba and Curaçao

⁸ Shortened to FPI

Papiamentu into the curriculum. Not only does this affect education it also affects the creole identity of Papiamentu speakers.

Creole used as a direct term for Papiamentu is usually reserved for linguists and specialists who work on the language. As Eva Martha Eckkrammer states, “Papiamento speakers themselves would not refer to their language as krioyo, since the vernacular employs the lexical item krioyo almost exclusively to denote objects or animals with a local genesis” (2003:94). Another reason that the term krioyo or creole is not often used to describe Papiamentu is that the term is usually synonymous with food, music, or some aspect of folklore. This is interesting because many view Papiamentu as an essential part of their culture.

Papiamentu, however, creates a sense of being a *Rubiano*⁹ or *Yu’i Kòrsou*¹⁰ within the community. Since the vernacular is considered a unifier for many on the islands it has been used in many cultural genres, such as literary texts and music. As Iris Bachmann states:

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, we find an increasing interest in the vernacular by the local elite, who began to use Papiamentu for poetic expression and collected local folklore to add a distinctive Caribbean touch to their *criollo* identity vis-à-vis the numerous new arrivals from the Netherlands. [Bachmann 2006:83-84]

Historically Papiamentu was used as an identity marker to help distinguish the Curaçao-born Dutch elite from the immigrants who came from the Netherlands. It was also the main vernacular spoken by the rest of the elite such as the Jews who were present on the island of Curaçao. This is evident in the fact that local authors in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century were already using the term Papiamentu while Dutch scholars preferred to use terms such as *negerspaans* (Negro Spanish) and *negertaaltje* (Negro lingo). This was in sharp contrast to other creoles present in the Caribbean that did not have their own distinctive name and were thus named the “Negro” version of their lexifier’s language such as *negerengels* (Negro

⁹ Rubiano means Aruban in Papiamentu.

¹⁰ Yu’i Kòrsou mean Curaçaoan in Papiamentu.

English) or *negerhollands* (Negro Dutch) (Bachmann 2007:89). Around this same time, linguists and anthropologists were using racial characteristics to justify the use of certain speech patterns present in creoles like Papiamentu. For instance, Bachmann (2007:91) states that Dutch linguist A.A. Fokker noted that the *pure bilabial w* represented by a [b] or a [v] sound in Spanish did not occur in Papiamentu. Instead, only the [b] sound is heard. Fokker attributed this characteristic to the Afro-Curaçaoans who he claimed could not produce this sound because of their somewhat rather large lips. In his article, Fokker never mentions why the sole use of the [b] is prevalent within other ethnic communities on the islands. It can be construed that since this language ultimately originated among the enslaved, other ethnic communities adopted this trait among others from the vernacular. It is interesting to note that Fokker confesses that Papiamentu could not have developed and excelled by being “*eenvoud van konstruktie*” (simply constructed). He in fact argues on the contrary and even remarks that it’s a wonder that the “*hoger staande volken*” (higher standing people)¹¹ can use the creole as the main language (Fokker 1914:61-62).

This is why philology was integral in creating the creole identity in Aruba and Curaçao. Through the study of different literary sources that were produced on the islands, it is evident that Papiamentu was being used regardless of the lack of a standardized syntax or lexicon. As was discussed in the previous chapter, Papiamentu surfaced in personal literary documents as early as the eighteenth century. This shows that Papiamentu was not just some vernacular that was only spoken to slaves but in fact a language that was spoken despite social status.

The social status of Papiamentu is impacted by the perception of the language and its respect to a creole identity. The arguments made suggest that there are historical implications as to why Papiamentu has attained the significance that it has. Although Papiamentu has become the main vernacular for Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao, negative cultural implications toward the

¹¹ This is in reference to the Europeans that were present among the inhabitants of the West Coast of Africa.

language persist and have a profound effect. Historically Papiamentu was cast to the side in favor of the Dutch language especially in the educational system. Because of this, problems persist today. Currently, Papiamentu is in the forefront of the cultural revival that is taking place on both Aruba and Curaçao, but due to old negative notions towards the language, it is feared that history might repeat itself with respect to Papiamentu losing significant status within the most prevalent setting: education.

CHAPTER TWO: PAPIAMENTU IN RELATION TO OTHER LANGUAGES

Introduction

Papiamentu has always had a strong relationship with several different languages. During its formation, lexical borrowings from various idioms such as Spanish were incorporated into Papiamentu and were adapted to the speech styles of Papiamentu. For instance: the Portuguese word *avisa* (warn) became *bisa* (to tell) in Papiamentu, the Dutch word *bedankt* (thanks) became *danki* (thanks) in Papiamentu. Other words only changed slightly. For instance: the Spanish word *casa* (house) became *kas* (house) in Papiamentu; the Portuguese word *vai* (goes) became *bai* (to go) in Papiamentu. Some words that were taken from other languages only changed due to the different spellings in the official orthographies of Aruba and Curaçao. Contrary to this, most people, primarily generations who did not receive formal Papiamentu instruction in school, still spell these words according to how they are spelled in their original tongues. For instance, words such as *djus* (juice) that is derived from English and *stul* (chair) that derived from the Dutch word *stoel* (chair) can also be seen written according to their original spelling from their lexifier language.

There are also a number of words and small phrases that have folklore behind them. For instance, it is purported that a local snack called Johnny cake,¹² found in Aruba, Curaçao, and Bonaire, received its name from the term *journey's cake*. One observer noted that when men used to go to work, their wives would provide them with these journey's cakes for their long trip. Due to the strong English Caribbean accents from people who immigrated to Aruba and

¹² Johnny cakes are commonly referred to as bakes on some Caribbean islands. Contrast to the Johnny cakes made in Rhode Island with cornmeal, these Johnny cakes are made with flour and then fried.

Curaçao, journey's cake would be pronounced like Johnny cake, therefore giving the snack its present name (Personal conversation with researcher, July 12, 2010). It is uncertain whether this story behind the name is true.

Other words in Papiamentu have historical origins. The Papiamentu word *djarason* (Wednesday) came from the Portuguese phrase *dia de ração* (day of ration). During the time of slavery on the islands, slaves would be given their weekly rations on Wednesday. This practice might have been taken over from the Portuguese who used to give out rations on Wednesday in their African holdings. Thus when the Dutch took over the practice in Aruba and Curaçao, the name of the day of the week was taken over as well. The Papiamentu words for Thursday and Friday also have historical origins. The Spanish derivations of the Roman Catholic holidays of Holy Thursday and Holy Friday¹³ were called *Weps Santu* and *Biernè Santu* respectively. They were altered to become *djaweps* (Thursday) and *djabièrnè* (Friday) in Papiamentu (Martinus 2004:31).

African lexical borrowings are also present in Papiamentu, although not as pronounced as the European borrowings. There are, however, borrowings or Africanisms of folklore, primarily in Curaçao. For instance, the trickster spider *Ananse*¹⁴ which is a prevalent character in West African folktales was adapted into Papiamentu to become the Curaçaoan folktales *Kompa Nanzi*. These short narratives are similar to the Br'er Rabbit stories of the United States.

A syntactical borrowing, primarily from the Bantu languages, is the repetition of words. The duplication of words in Papiamentu is a way to stress adjectives within a sentence. In English, words such as *more* and *really* emphasize on the adjective. For instance, in the phrase: *E ta kansá kansá* (He/She is really tired); repetition of the word *kansá* emphasizes the extent of

¹³ Holy Friday is also known as Good Friday.

¹⁴ In Twi *ananse* means spider.

exhaustion. Another form of repetition in Papiamentu creates new words altogether. For example, the word *pata* means leg, hoof, or paw while the word *patapata* means drunk or full. Another example of this type of repetition is the word *pega* (stick, nearby). Its duplication becomes *pegapega* meaning gecko. The origin of this word could have been derived from this lizard's behavioral characteristic of sticking on walls.

As mentioned before, the Arawak linguistic influence on Papiamentu is mainly observed in the names of flora and the names of places in Aruba such as Bushiribana. There are no syntactical borrowings from any of the Arawak languages.

Recently Papiamentu has had a more direct relationship with other languages. Because of an increase in American and Latin American pop culture on the islands, there has been an influx of lexical borrowings from other languages. For example, the use of the word *cuatro* (four) originally from Spanish has trickled into Papiamentu. Although the original word *kuater* (four) is still commonly used, *cuatro* is becoming more common. This will be discussed further throughout the chapter.

Caribbean Creole Languages and Papiamentu

Are other creoles in the Caribbean seen as distinct languages or are they merely seen as dialects of a European language? The answer varies according to the person you ask. But there is one marker that separates them from Papiamentu; their lexicons are mainly derived from the language of the colonizer. For instance, most of the lexicon from Jamaican Patois and Trinidadian Creole English is derived from the English language. Haitian Kreyòl is also lexically related to French. Even though there are distinct lexical and syntactic leading

differences, these creoles can often be viewed as a dialect of a language such as English or French to someone who is not familiar with these creole languages.

In Aruba and Curaçao, there are different perceptions of creole languages. A few interviewees for this project noted that they thought Papiamentu was better than other creole languages in the Caribbean because it was so different from the others. Some of the consultants believed that Papiamentu was spoken by everyone, whereas there was a distinction as to who spoke Haitian Kreyòl in Haiti. They also gave the impression that more can be done with Papiamentu. For instance, there was a sense that Papiamentu allows one to be more expressive. In an interview with the author, Vianlette Wiel, 50, a lottery ticket seller, stated “Eiden nan mi por hasi tur kos. Mi por kanta, mi por yora, mi por zundra, mas mihó ku na tur otro idioma, wèl.” [In there I can do everything. I can sing, I can cry, I can scold, much better than any other language, well.] (July 17, 2009).

There were a few consultants that openly admitted that they had a bias towards Papiamentu. In an interview with the author, Deva-dee Siliee, 24, student, states:

Perhaps I’m biased and I’m going to admit that on interview. Perhaps I’m biased but I feel that it’s, you can say that the Haitian Creole has also its own identity. But it’s so strongly derived and recognized as part of that imperial French. It’s that French imperial legacy you know, while in Curaçao it has, it’s a continuation of so many different stages of the development of our islands and the history. You know slavery, colonialism, independence and how we relate to each other on the different islands. I would say, I don’t know necessarily if it is any different but I say Papiamentu is, it’s my own opinion again I might be biased, Papiamentu is very alive. It is a very much alive language in that it is always transforming. If you look at the difference between Curaçao and Aruba, how we’ve adopted, we use sort of a different syntax and different ways of writing things. It’s old in that it’s existed for a long time, but its changing and that it’s coming into being right now. It’s not something that has been established and I think it has the potential for it to be really big. [November 28, 2009]

Siliee mentions the linguistic relationship between the different islands in comparison to the linguistic relationship between Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao. This is an important factor

because it distinguishes Papiamentu from other Caribbean creoles such as English Patois spoken in Jamaica and Antillean Creole spoken in other English Caribbean islands such as Trinidad. This can be due to the current political positions each island has in the Caribbean. Although Aruba and Curaçao are no longer considered part of the same country, they share the same official language just with two different orthographies. They also shared a long history of political connection with each other as countries that were part of the aggregate of countries that constituted the Netherland Antilles. The separation of Aruba from the Netherlands Antilles resulted in major political issues and along with it, the divisive discourse on Papiamentu. Other creoles in the Caribbean mainly developed on their own islands that were separate entities.

Many participants noted that creoles such as Jamaican Patois or the Spanish spoken in Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic had more speakers than Papiamentu. These creole languages were seen generally as English or Spanish dialects not individually specific to one island. It is interesting to note that they viewed these creoles in this way because in Aruba and Curaçao language is seen as one of the most prevalent cultural markers. If the sociolinguistic issues associated with other creole languages in the Caribbean are perceived in this way, it can identify these creoles as having less worth. It was stated that each Caribbean island had their own vernacular, but consultants viewed them as merely dialects of the creole (English or Spanish), rather than distinct languages. They also viewed Papiamentu this way in terms of the dichotomy between Aruba and Curaçao. Each island had a dialect of Papiamentu that was unique to the isle.

Some of the consultants mentioned that since the lexicon of creoles from other Caribbean islands derived primarily from one European language, there was a larger community that could

understand these vernaculars. In an interview with the author, Yrdja Sillé, 32, temp agency consultant, stated:

Other Caribbean languages, I don't know if they are other creole languages in the Caribbean because when I think about it, the other islands only speak English or Spanish. English or Spanish, those are big languages. It's not something that makes the other islands in the Caribbean unique for their language. Because the language has been brought over from Latin America or United States or England and it was kept that way. [July 16, 2009]

There are slight variations to these expressed sentiments. Even though they appear to derive solely from English or Spanish, there are distinctions that made in accordance to the country. For example, the Spanish creole spoken in the Dominican Republic is different from the Spanish creole heard in Colombia. In an interview with the author, Erna Hooi-Béréños, 60 plus, temp agency consultant, expresses these exact sentiments stating, "They speak a lot of, now with all the Latinos here, you hear Spanish that's not Spanish, but you hear that a lot. We were taught Spanish in school, *Castellano*, but what they speak, *Dominicano* another thing from the *Colombiano*. But they all say they speak Spanish so you hear that a lot" (July 16, 2009). It is interesting to note that what is perceived as the standard form of Spanish came from Spain and not any other Spanish. Even though there are different dialects of Spanish spoken in Spain, *Castellano* Spanish is seen as the standard form of Spanish.

Another sentiment that was expressed by some consultants was that there could be no comparison; each creole took its own course and, therefore Papiamentu could not be compared to others. In an interview with author, Deya Mensche, 29, journalist, noted, "I'm not going to give a worth to something that had a different course of development" (July 14, 2009). In an interview with the author, Antonia Thielman, 47, business owner, expressed, "Ami no tin diskriminashon den esei. *Dus*, tur hende, ta nan manera di papia. (I do not discriminate with that. That's their way of speaking.) (August 8, 2009). By comparing the individual creoles with

Papiamentu, some consultants believed that it would mean that one creole had more value than another creole. Discriminating against other creoles would also mean perpetuating the stereotype that creole languages would have less value against other languages such as English or French.

Social Distribution of Other Languages on the Islands in Relation to Papiamentu

There are numerous languages spoken on the islands. Some of these languages have been spoken on the ABC islands for an extensive time, while others have arrived only recently due to the arrival of immigrants. Languages such as Spanish, Dutch, and Portuguese have been spoken on the islands since the arrivals of Europeans from the late 1400s to the early 1500s. English became more prevalent on the islands when the oil refineries came in the 1920s; its usage was more widespread in Aruba than in Curaçao due to the prevalence of people from the English-speaking Caribbean. The prevalence of the English language has increased recently in Curacao due to the arrival of American television channels and music. Other languages that recently arrived on the island are: Chinese, Hindu, Arabic, Yiddish, Hebrew, Jamaican Patois and Kreyòl. Many of these languages came to the islands due to the influx of immigrants that came during the 1950s and 1960s and later on in the 1980s and 1990s.

The social distribution of languages in Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao varies depending on the individual and the language. For instance, the Hindus and the Arabs mainly work in the commercial sector and own most of the retail stores on the islands. The Chinese work mainly in the restaurant and supermarket industries. Since these three ethnic groups deal with island customers on a daily basis, they have some sort of proficiency in Papiamentu. If they do not have a strong skill level in the language, they usually have their children work in positions that

involve customer contact. Deya Mensche notes that immigrants' determination to gain proficiency in Papiamentu can be attributed to the fact that when they immigrated to the ABC islands, they had no intentions of leaving because they created a home and a business on the islands, so it was pertinent to know Papiamentu (Interview with author on July 14, 2009).

Not only do they strive to gain fluency in Papiamentu but they learn English as well. Tourism is a major factor for both Curaçao and Aruba and many tourists come primarily from the United States or the Netherlands. It is not clear whether immigrants who do not speak Dutch learn Dutch. It can be assumed that since Curaçao gets their main tourism from The Netherlands, these three groups speak some Dutch or maybe their children speak Dutch.

Historically, the Jews were the primary merchants in the capital city of Willemstad. Since they spoke Portuguese and Ladino, it was easy for them to transition into Papiamentu since Papiamentu resembled both languages. While they are still present on the island as merchants, they typically own the more established stores such as the Penha House which has been in existence since the 1700s.

The Chinese differ from the Hindu and Arabic shop owners slightly. They are in more contact with the locals because many of their bars are situated in neighborhoods. These bars, affectionately called *restorant'i chines* (Chinese restaurants)¹⁵ by the locals, are local hang-out spots for some in the neighborhoods. They are often open until very late and people can be seen grabbing a beer and talking for hours until closing. The children of the Chinese owners are usually in the front attending to the customers because they often have a better command of Papiamentu than their parents. Many of these children are born on the islands and interact regularly with others who speak Papiamentu solely. In an interview with the author, Deya Mensche notes:

¹⁵ Not really restaurants where you sit, more so like the take-away Chinese restaurants seen here in America.

The funniest of them all are the Chinese, ‘cause the Chinese tend to be a very closed off society but every *restorant di Chines* is in the ghetto. So what happens; they have to learn to speak Papiamentu and who learns to speak Papiamentu, the children. And what happens they become friends and have a bunch of half Chinese half *krioyo* kids walking around as a result. Trust me. They knock up the daughter of the *Chinu*. Trust me. (Laughs) Look, the Chinese usually don’t have the mentality “we’re going to leave Curaçao after awhile. Well my kid is half *yu’i Kòrsou* and what not.” [July 14, 2009]

By having half *yu’i Kòrsou* children and learning to speak Papiamentu, the Chinese are able to assimilate easier into Aruban or Curaçaoan life. They are in effect becoming *yu’i Kòrsou* or a *Rubiano*.

The children of Hindus and Arabs often have a better command of Papiamentu than their parents as well, but their parents are usually in the forefront along with their children. By the third generation, and sometimes the second, the native language is lost in preference for Papiamentu.

Jamaicans and Haitians often have a similar experience as the Chinese, Hindus, and Arabs. They do not have many interactions with tourists; they primarily interact with Papiamentu speakers. They often work as domestics in someone’s home or as vendors selling ‘authentic’¹⁶ souvenirs. Because of this, they learn Papiamentu relatively quickly. In an interview with the author, Deya Mensche notes that even though the Papiamentu of many immigrants may not be perfect, many local Curaçaoans can appreciate that they at least try to speak the language (July 14, 2009). In Aruba, the sentiments are similar; even though they might not be completely fluent in Papiamentu, at least they have moderate fluency in the language.

Not all immigrants receive the same respects; those from Latin America are a prime example. The Latin Americans primarily come from the Dominican Republic, Colombia, and

¹⁶ Haitians who work in Curaçao as vendors sell African art that they advertise to tourists as authentic art from Curaçao. This ‘authentic’ art is usually made in Haiti.

Venezuela and usually work in the hotel industry. This can be attributed to when the tourism boom hit Aruba and Curaçao and many Latinos came to work in this industry, primarily as maids in the hotels. While they live and work on the islands, Papiamentu is not a language that is often heard being spoken by them. Since they do not often interact with many tourists or locals, Papiamentu and English are seldom spoken. Not only are they often compared to other immigrants such as the Hindus and the Chinese, they are also compared to the migrants who came to work in the oil refineries in the 1920s. Those immigrants, primarily from the English Caribbean, learned Papiamentu. For instance, in Aruba, Papiamentu was used even though English was commonly spoken in San Nicolaas.¹⁷ Although some of the immigrants were not fluent in Papiamentu, they were able to facilitate communication in the language.

Many of the consultants that I interviewed expressed that they thought that the Latinos refused to learn Papiamentu. They believed that if you were living on the island and working on the island than you should be able to speak the common language of most residents. Whether it is a proven fact that the Latino immigrants continue to use Spanish and refuse to learn Papiamentu has yet to be determined. But through participant-observation, it was noted that Spanish was heard mainly in the streets of Aruba (August 6, 2009).

The same sentiments are articulated about the Dutch. The Dutch, who mainly come to work on the islands, are called *stagiairs* (interns). Although some do not plan to stay on the island, it is thought by many on the islands that they should learn Papiamentu so that they can communicate with the locals on the island. In an interview with the author, school teacher Shendell Reed, 35, states:

If I'm in the Netherlands, I have to speak Dutch to communicate with them. So why don't they speak Papiamentu to communicate with me when they are in Curaçao. But I don't think like that when I am talking to an American and why is that? So that is a

¹⁷ Many people who came from the English Caribbean to work in the oil refinery in Aruba settled in San Nicolaas.

question I even ask myself and I ask for the person's side, I know and I came to the conclusion that due to business, pure business. The Americans or English speaking person, they're here mainly because of the tourism, but the Dutch person they're here and they're slightly taking over the jobs from the native Curaçao people or the housing. If you see how many Dutch persons are buying lots and houses over here making the market prices so high it's just a normal standard Curaçao guy that cannot afford to compete with them. [July 15, 2009]

There is a dichotomy of behavior when speaking to different nationalities on the islands. When Americans are on the islands, many locals speak English with them, whereas Dutch is seldom spoken. It was noted in personal conversations with people from both islands that many locals want to show that they are fluent in at least four different languages. Speaking English to a tourist is almost seen as displaying a high level of intelligence. It demonstrates that they were able to master a world language such as English and become fluent. There was not a clear answer as to why these sentiments were not same for speaking with the Dutch. When asked this question, similar answers were given: they, the Dutch, should learn to speak Papiamentu when they are on the island rather than the islanders having to speak Dutch. There is also one difference to consider. As Shendell Reed points out, there is a distinction as to why the Dutch are on the island as opposed to the Americans. The Dutch usually live on the island and do not speak Papiamentu while Americans are mainly tourists. There might be a reason as to why the Dutch do not speak Papiamentu. Since locals in Aruba and Curaçao learn Dutch at a young age, it can be assumed by the Dutch that locals would automatically speak Dutch with them since they know the language. There would be no need to learn Papiamentu since it would not be used any other place besides Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao. This neocolonial attitude is what keeps Papiamentu at a lesser status politically against Dutch.

Although it seems that there is a disdain for the Dutch language, many Dutch words are interjected into Papiamentu, primarily by the generation that went to school before the 1970s.

Since Dutch was ingrained in education without Papiamentu in the past, it is possible that this is the reason why so much Dutch is used by older put into Papiamentu speakers. There is one fact, however, that contradicts this theory; the elderly, people who are in their seventies or older, do not speak Papiamentu with many additives. In my field notes I purport since the elderly had no real reason to use Dutch during their adolescence they used Papiamentu without any words interjected from other languages. When they became the pioneering generation that started to attain higher positions such as government positions, their children became more aware of Dutch because it was present in everyday speech. When their children became adults and were well established in positions that required an extensive use of Dutch, speaking Dutch became more prevalent.

The Papiamentu that is spoken by many under the age of seventy has heavy lexical borrowings from other languages. Here is an example from a participant that was interviewed:

Pero mi ta *eens* ku tin hopi palabranan ku nos no ta, nos tuma hopi over di hulandes òf di otro idioma *dus* lo ta bon pa nos bin ku un ortografia bon, pa bo siña papia bo Papiamentu bon. Pero pa *voer* e in na skol komo un *voer taal*, mi ta wak komo un vak, *vooral* pa *verdere studie*. Kustumber, echt, mané ami mes, ki ora mi *vertaal*, ora mi mester tradusí, mi ta pensa den hulandes promé, echt *waar*. Mi no sa. Ma bai skol na Kòrsou pa dos aña; hulandes so nos tabata papia, pero semper. Dor ku e tabata semper *engels-nederlands*, *spaans-nederlands*; *dus* kiko mi no ta *vertaal* na Papiamentu, despues mi ta pens'é ingles. Mi ta *vertaal* na hulandes e ora ei mi ta bai pa loke ki mi kier haña, semper.

[But I am agreeing that there are a lot of words that we don't, we took a lot from Dutch or other languages so it will be good for us to come with a good orthography, for you to learn to speak your Papiamentu well. But to add it into school as the language of instruction, I see it as a subject, especially to further your studies. A custom, really, like me myself, when I translate, when I have to translate, I think in Dutch first, honestly. I don't know. I went to school in Curaçao for two years; we only spoke Dutch, but always. Because it was always English-Dutch, Spanish-Dutch; therefore whatever I don't translate in Papiamentu, afterward I think of it in English. I translate in Dutch then I can go for what I want to find, always.][August 10, 2009]

This example highlights the utilization of Dutch words in Papiamentu. Even the consultant herself, mentions the over use of other languages in her speech. It was also stated from another

consultant that whenever a problem needed to be thought out, it is always done in Papiamentu, especially in subjects such as mathematics. For instance, it was observed that people from both islands tended to count in Dutch. When asked why this was done, they said they were taught mathematics in Dutch and that it seemed natural for them to count in Dutch (August 1, 2009).

Certified medical pedicurist, Karen van Blarcum, 58, states:

Nos ta papia un tiki *slordug* eigenlijk. Nos ta papia pa papia. Ke men segun nos ta papia *and* dor ku bo ta dominá mas idioma anto e ora ei; òf e ta un kustumber, un kultura di nos anto. Ora nos ta papia, nos ta gewoon ko'i e palabra ku ta bin den nos boka; nos ta usa na kua idioma ku e ta. Sea e ta ingles òf hulandes, nos ta djis dal e aden. Nos no ta, ya si bo wak di e otro banda; nos no ta papia hopi e Papiamentu korekto *dus* sin usa otro palabra di otro idioma aden.

[We speak a little sloppy actually. We talk to talk. Meaning as we speak and because you dominate more than one language and because of that; or it is a custom, a culture of ours. When we speak, we just grab the word that comes in our mouths; we use whichever language. Whether it is English or Dutch, we just put it in. We don't, yeah if you see it on the other side; we don't really speak the correct Papiamentu, without using words from other languages.][August 7, 2009]

What can be done about this problem? Is it even considered a problem? These were some of the issues that were tackled during the interviews. While some consultants saw the insertion of words from other languages as a problem that needed to be fixed in order to preserve Papiamentu, others celebrated the fact that they could switch from language to language with ease. Due to the fact that they were able to learn different languages in school as children, code switching between languages and the insertion of words from different languages was natural for many locals of that generation.

The generation that is currently in secondary school does not really see this as a problem. Although they were not interviewed based on their age, many students who were going to secondary school often praised the fact that they could switch into different languages with ease. What was even more surprising, they often preferred to speak English rather than Papiamentu. In an interview with the author, Ashanti Benjamin, 27, teacher, offers a reason as to why this

notion is prevailing. She notes, “So because right now it’s a trend that Papiamentu, a lot of people, let me tell you, the youth, the ones that are going to study abroad, they are of the opinion why do I need Papiamentu if it’s not a world language, you understand” (July 16, 2009). The social implications imposed by the students impart issues affecting its social status on the islands. If they see Papiamentu as not having a value then Papiamentu might be lost in the long run. This overt use of English can also be attributed to the major presence of American television. Because American television is easily accessible, people who are in primary and secondary school speak English at a higher level than expected, sometimes even at a higher standard than their parents. This is true both in the written and spoken forms of English.

Discussion

Many issues are involved when considering Papiamentu in relation to other languages. Papiamentu can relate to other languages in many different ways. Languages can relate as an additive in Papiamentu, Papiamentu can be compared to other languages present in Aruba and Curaçao, and it can be used for code-switching.

There have been many linguists in Curaçao and Aruba who have theorized about Papiamentu’s origins from the languages Spanish and Portuguese. Papiamentu’s relationship to these languages has helped to shape the orthographies as well how Papiamentu sounds on each island. Some of the leading linguists include Jossy Mansur from Aruba and Frank Martinus Arion from Curaçao. Jossy Mansur was one of the passionate people behind Aruba’s etymological orthography. This orthography followed the spelling of the Spanish language since Mansur believed that Papiamentu came primarily from Spanish. In Curaçao, Frank Martinus Arion theorized that Papiamentu formulated primarily an Afro-Portuguese creole that was

present on the West Coast of Africa. Through this, aspects of Papiamentu in Curaçao resemble some aspects of Brazilian Portuguese. For instance, the use of the phonetic [u] sound of many <o> ending words in the Curaçaoan Papiamentu is similar to some dialects of Brazilian Portuguese. In Aruba, these words are pronounced with a [ɔ] sound similar to Spanish. Through this, rules have been applied to both orthographies. As mentioned before, Curaçao made a phonological orthography while Aruba has made an etymological orthography. The syntax for both orthographies is the same.

The ability to code-switch is often seen as a positive aspect because it shows the diversity that many Arubans and Curaçaoans have. Not only do immigrants or descendants of immigrants easily code-switch from language to language, many native Arubans and Curaçaoans can easily code-switch from language to language as well. For instance, in my field notes I noted that a local in Aruba was speaking to a friend in Papiamentu. When a tourist stopped and asked for directions, the local immediately switched to English with ease, told the tourist the directions and immediately went back to Papiamentu without pausing (August 12, 2009). Many Arubans and Curaçaoans celebrate the fact that the ability to code-switch is easy for them. This gives them the chance to prove what they are known for, the ability to speak four languages. Although not everyone on the islands is able to code-switch easily, many are still able to communicate in at least four languages.

A negative effect of the prevalent use of other languages is that Papiamentu tends to fade in the background. What is being seen is that there is increased usage of words from other languages being inserted into Papiamentu. Instead of finding the word in Papiamentu, many Arubans and Curaçaoans opt to use a word that immediately comes to their mind regardless of language. Historically lexical borrowings came from Dutch, but recently English is being used

more often. As can be seen from some excerpts from the interviews above, words such as *eigenlijk* (actually) can become the standard. Since Papiamentu resembles Spanish, Papiamentu can fall into the trap of becoming a Spanish dialect since Spanish is spoken a lot on the islands due to the influx of Latino immigrants. Without the enforcements of rules of the standardized versions of Papiamentu, there is nothing to stop Papiamentu from turning into a Spanish dialect. Although this can be seen as not being a problem, ultimately the Papiamentu that is spoken can become lost and emerge as a dialect of a language such as Spanish.

CHAPTER THREE: IDENTITY THROUGH PAPIAMENTU

Introduction

I think the moment you start losing your cultural identity is when you start losing your language. I don't know if he (great grandfather) tried to do it purposely or not; but by not speaking your native language with your kids says something about maybe the trauma that you had with your cultural identity. Because when I started learning Arabic I started understanding the culture better...and music and flavors and everything because you can relate to it.

This quote was taken from an interview with Deya Mensche (interview with author, July 14, 2009). Her great grandfather was a Lebanese immigrant who became quite successful as a carpet merchant in Curaçao. But unlike many of the recent immigrants who came to the islands, he did not retain much of his cultural characteristics, primarily the Arabic language. In a sense, he traded his Lebanese heritage in exchange for the Curaçaoan culture. This Lebanon immigrant in effect became a *yu'i Kòrsou* (literal translation means child of Curaçao, Curaçaoan), therefore making all his children and grandchildren a *yu'i Kòrsou*.¹⁸ According to Mensche, her great grandfather never spoke a word of Arabic to his children, opting to speak only Papiamentu. Years later after his death, many of his grandchildren and great-grandchildren decided to reclaim their Lebanese heritage by taking Arabic lessons on the island. Because many of them secretly signed up for these classes, they were surprised to see each other on the first day.

Just like the Arabic language brought Mensche and her family members closer to their Lebanese heritage, Papiamentu is considered a major component of the cultural identity of many Arubans and Curaçaoans. It is a distinct way to identify who they are as a people. Not only do they use it to facilitate communication, they also use it as a way to express themselves.

Celebrated cultural singer Elia Isenia, 51, states,

¹⁸ *Yu'i Kòrsou* is considered both the singular and plural form.

Papiamentu bo ta kanta, bo ta grita; bo ta yora papiando na Papiamentu. E ta sali ku e ekspreshon ei ta tòch kualkier hende. Papiamentu di Boneiru tin su ola. Papiamentu di Aruba tin su kantá. Papiamentu di Kòrsou tambe tin su parti mané melodia ku ta drenta subi baha. Papiamentu di Kòrsou tin un ola, e ta mané ola di laman. E hende ta papia, bo ta sinti e zonido subi baha. Bo ta tende e zonido. Anto e tin un kadans, mané un melodia. Esei ta e dushi di Papiamentu.

[In Papiamentu you sing, you shout; you cry in Papiamentu. It leaves as an expression through any person. Papiamentu from Bonaire has its wave. Papiamentu from Aruba has its song. Papiamentu from Curaçao also has its part like a melody that comes high or low. Papiamentu from Curaçao has a wave, like the wave of the ocean. When the people speak, you can feel the sound go up and down. You hear the sound. And it has a cadence, like a melody. That is the beauty of Papiamentu.][Interview with author, July 20, 2009]

Papiamentu can also be used in entertainment. Many of the musical styles found in Aruba and Curaçao are sung exclusively in Papiamentu. A musical style such as the *dande*, which is performed in Aruba, is equivalent to Christmas carols in the United States except they are sung for the New Year. A group of about five to six people go from door to door and sing *dande* songs to celebrate the New Year. *Dande* is often sung in a call and response manner in which a singer sings some lines and the response is *ai nobe*¹⁹ (new year). They are only found on the island and serve as an important cultural factor.

Another musical style that has a major cultural significance on the islands is *tambú*. *Tambú* originated in Curaçao but can be heard at special events all over Aruba and Bonaire. *Tambú* is a musical style and dance that was banned for many years due to the dancing being thought of as lewd. Presently, it is mainly danced during the Christmas season and is considered the national cultural dance of Curaçao. During a *tambú* dance, men and women will hear the beat of the *tambú* drum against the high shrills of the *chapi* (flat metal blade of a hoe) and dance as close as possible for as long as possible. The lyrics that accompany the music will usually set the tone of the dance. The lyrics can reflect what is going on in the neighborhood or what is happening around the island. Historically, *tambú* singers used to get their lyrics from a particular

¹⁹ *Ai nobe* is shortened version of the phrase *aña nobo* meaning New Year.

place. Throughout the week, people would write their thoughts or the local gossip on little pieces of paper called *bandera* (flag). They would then put them in the walls of buildings in the main town of Punda. It is not clear where in the walls these *banderanan* would be put. The *tambú* singers would then pickup these *banderanan* and incorporate them into a song. At the next local party these lyrics would be sung and everyone would know what was happening on the island. Today, *tambú* songs can still be heard sung by renowned singers such as Elia Isenia and Aya, although the lyrics and style of obtaining lyrics have changed. The lyrics now pertain mainly to politics or general problems that are persisting such as a family member taking drugs. Although *tambú* is socially accepted by the majority of the islanders, there is still some controversy that surrounds it. The ban that limited its time, formerly from year round, to just the months of December and January is still in effect. It has been noted that *tambú* singers who wish to sing *tambú* songs around that time must submit their musical material to the government two weeks before the *tambú* season starts (Interview with author, December 19, 2009). They are not allowed to play their *tambú* music until it is approved.

Papiamentu has also seeped into other varieties of popular music on the islands. While popular genres such as hip hop and reggaeton are sung in a variety of languages in Aruba and Curaçao, Papiamentu is now one of main languages that are used. Rap songs in Papiamentu can be heard blasting from cars as they drive down the main streets of Aruba and Curaçao. Genres invented on the islands such as *bailabel*, which mixes Haitian *compa* music, Curaçaoan *tumba*, and salsa, are one of the most popular styles of music played in the nightclubs.

Papiamentu can also be used to help an aspiring singer to win a contest. Aruba has a talent showcase that is modeled after the American television show “American Idol”. This showcase, “Sparkling Tour”, is broadcast for a number of weeks to exhibit the talent of young

budding singers hoping to win. Each week a contestant is voted off the show until finally there is one winner. As the final show of 2009 progressed, a girl who looked no older than eighteen stepped onto the stage. She wore a beautiful white and purple dress and looked a bit shy as she took the microphone. The house band started to play “I Will Always Love You” by Whitney Houston, and a huge voice came out of this tiny girl. Instantly the crowd went wild. By the second verse, there was an interesting twist. Instead of singing the lyrics in English, she sang the second verse completely in Papiamentu. With this move it was apparent that she had won over the crowd, and by the end of the night, she was rightfully crowned the winner of “Sparkling Tour”. Not only did she win the judges over by singing beautifully in Papiamentu but it was apparent that the crowd connected with her more because she sang in Papiamentu. Even though there were other contestants who sang songs originally written in Papiamentu, this move stood out. She made an American song culturally relevant to the people of Aruba.

Cultural Identity in Aruba and Curaçao

English anthropologist, Sir Edward Burnett Tylor, wrote that “culture, or civilization, taken in its broad, ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society” (Tylor 1873:1). Simply put, culture is perceived as a learned behavior. Presently in anthropology there is no one set definition of culture. For instance, it could relate to just folkloric dance or it could mean music. This was the exact same sentiment that was prevalent on the islands. Although there were many general answers to what was perceived as culture (dance, folklore, art, and music), culture also represented something more innate within the societies of Aruba and Curaçao. It was their sense of national pride and it was what they believed made

them who they are today. Their identity is within their culture, especially within their language. According to Diana Antonette, 64, celebrated dance instructor, (interview with author, August 5, 2009), “E ta e base, mi ta haña, di nos kultura, ku bo por ekspresá bo mes den un idioma” (It is the base, I find, of our culture, that you can express yourself in a language.) Elia Isenia notes the same idea. She states (interview with author, July 20, 2009), “E identidat di Kòrsou ku Aruba ta nan idioma, nan músika, nan kustumber, i kreenshanan” (The identity of Curaçao and Aruba is their language, their music, their customs, and beliefs.) Since both Arubans and Curaçaoans have struggled for years over their cultural identity, there were a variety of answers that were given when asked about their interpretations of culture. One of the ways is through an historical perspective. According to Antonia Thielman:

Tin vario kultura ku nos a keda ku n'e; nos a kohe di antigua, di promé. Nos mayornan, e kultura kasi u'n tei. Nos no ta planta mas. Masha poko hende ta planta. Kultura ta mas tantu den folklor, bailenan; esenan so nan a keda ku n'e. Kasi si bo bisa kultura; ya nos papia di Aruba su matanan, esei nan tambe tin pero ya nan tambe ta kabando. Hasta nos Natural Bridge a kibra di su mes. Ke men kasi nos kultura, nos no tin muchu, no tin muchu.

[There are various cultures that we stayed with; we took from the past, in the beginning. The culture of our ancestors is almost gone. We don't plant anymore. Very little do people plant. Culture is more in folklore, dances; those are the only ones that stayed. If you say culture, we talk about the plants from Aruba. They also have those but they are also ending. Even our Natural Bridge²⁰ broke by itself. Meaning almost all of our culture, we don't have much; there is not much.][Interview with author, August 8, 2009]

Thielman brings up a good point about culture. This notion of culture as mainly visible in folklore is not a new concept in Aruba. For the past ten to fifteen years, many on the island thought that culture on Aruba had been lost. For instance, Theodoor de Jongh, 52, government worker, noted that it might have started earlier than fifteen years ago. De Jongh noted, “Pero, *it's sad to say* ku Aruba amerikanisá hopi, *voraal* dor di e *oil refinery* kuminsá bin akianan. Asina

²⁰ The Natural Bridge, which was one of the main cultural attractions in Aruba, collapsed in September of 2005.

e kultura mes a kai atras”. [But it’s sad to say that Aruba Americanized a lot, especially when the oil refinery came.][Interview with author, August 5, 2009]

Aruba has had a steady decline in what they perceive as culture. There is, however, some cultural revitalization occurring. As mentioned before *dande* is performed around New Year’s every year. There has also been a resurgence of the celebration of the holiday *Dia di San Juan* (St. John’s Day) and the cultural practice of *Dera Gai* (Bury the Rooster). On *Dia di San Juan* people gather around in a sandy area to perform the cultural practice of *Dera Gai*. According to a consultant, *Dera Gai* is performed with a live band while a person who is blindfolded searches for a buried rooster.

In the cultural event of *Dera Gai*, the person is blindfolded so as to not see where the rooster is going to be buried. Historically, a live rooster would be buried in the sand with the whole crowd watching. Once the rooster is buried, the band would begin to sing the *Dera Gai* song and the blindfolded person would be spun around a couple of times. This is done to disorient the person. The audience would then start to direct the blindfolded person to where the rooster was buried. The blindfolded person has a limited amount of time to find the rooster. If the rooster is found, this person will beat the head of the rooster with a stick to signal the finding. Presently, live roosters are no longer used; a rubber chicken is used instead. Both the blindfolded person and the band are judged on their performance. The band is judged on how well the *Dera Gai* song is sung, which is sung exclusively in Papiamentu, was performed.

Dera Gai is one of the few cultural practices that remain on the island of Aruba, besides Carnival. Although Carnival is considered one of the main cultural attractions for tourists, it is not considered an authentic tradition of Aruba because it came along with the West Indian immigrants who came to work in the oil refineries in the 1920s. Yet cultural practices such as

Dera Gai serve as a way to instill a national identity in many Arubans since there is little folklore present on the island. With these cultural traditions, not only is their identity being preserved but it gives the younger generation a chance to learn about and see what types of cultural practices took place in Aruba in the past. This in turn gives this generation a sense of who they are as Arubans.

Curaçao has also had a revival of culture in 2009. The restoration of old *lanthùisnan*, or plantation houses, helped to contribute to Curaçao's cultural charm. Along with the restoration of these houses came the revitalization of older cultural traditions such as *seú* and *tambú*. Although these cultural customs are performed every year, in 2009 they became more prominent. For instance, during the *Marcha Seú*²¹ parade held in April, Curaçao flags were present everywhere. Even many of the costumes bore colors similar to the colors of the flag. By having many of their costumes adorned with these colors, Curaçaoans showed their national pride and reverence for their country.

The cultural heritage of Curaçaoans was never more evident than at the *Dia di Bandera* (Flag Day) celebrations held on July 2, 2009. On this day, there was a breeze in the air as the Curaçao flag waved proudly in the middle of Brionplein in Willemstad, Curaçao. Boy scouts and girl scouts eagerly waited for the festivities to begin. Other children who were performing in the celebration were adorned in brightly colorful traditional Curaçaoan attire. As people began to take their seats, the stands became a sea of blue and yellow since many onlookers were dressed in clothing that resembled the Curaçaoan flag. Once the festivities began, there were performers who came from all over the island to commemorate the holiday. A little girl no older than eight proudly strode to the center of the plaza. She wore a traditional Curaçaoan skirt and blouse with a matching headdress. She had a look of confidence that was symbolized by her

²¹ Seú is the traditional harvest celebration.

smile as she started to recite her poem about the island of Curaçao. Her boisterous voice did not match her tiny frame as she acted out her poem. Once she was done, the crowd went wild as she brightly smiled and walked off the plaza. Throughout the rest of the ceremony, other entertainers performed folkloric dances such as *seú* and *tambú*. There were also various singers who sang about the island, the people, and its local traditions.

Although there is a revitalization of culture, some note that some customs such as traditional foodways are disappearing from day-to-day life. Homemaker Mercedes Lard 81, states:

Aworakí, hende no konosé un bon yambo, un bònchi, un stoba. Tur hende ta kome *pork chòp* ku galiña. *Na 'n ta bai den e kuminda krioyo, un bon guiambo, un bon kadushi'*. [Nowadays, people don't know a good okra soup²², a bean soup, a stew. Everyone eats pork chops and chicken. They don't go into the creole foods, a good okra soup, or a good cactus soup.][Interview with author, July 24, 2009]

The loss of some of these cultural customs can be due to the influx of different immigrants coming into both Aruba and Curaçao. With them they bring their own cultural traditions. Many of these traditions have been infused into the local culture of both Aruba and Curaçao, thus creating new customs that are considered part of the Aruban and Curaçaoan identity. For instance, the kind of Chinese food and other food that is found in Curaçao cannot be found elsewhere.

Immigrants and Their Sense of Belonging

Immigrants are placed in a difficult position between the desire to be considered an Aruban/Curaçaoan and how much of their own culture to retain. Historically, immigrants were able to intertwine their cultural practices within the Aruban and Curaçaoan culture. A prime

²² Okra soup is similar to the gumbo found in New Orleans except the *yambo* is clearer in color and has slimy texture and is served primarily as a soup.

example of this is Carnaval. When the immigrants of the English Caribbean, primarily Trinidad and Tobago, came to work in the refineries during the 1920s, they brought with them their own cultural practices. One of these practices was Carnaval. Carnaval is an integral part of the culture in both Aruba and Curaçao. Not only does Aruban and Curaçaoan Carnaval show remnants of Trinidadian Carnaval with extravagant costumes, but it also intertwines Aruban and Curaçaoan culture. For instance, although soca music is played at the time of Carnaval in Aruba, it is different from the soca that is generally found throughout the English Caribbean. The soca found in Aruba is sung in a combination of languages: English and Papiamentu. The tempo is also not as fast as some of the modern soca that is found in the English Caribbean. In Curaçao, they have taken soca out of Carnaval in favor of putting their own music, *tumba*. *Tumba* is a musical genre that was formed through a mixture of *tambú* and Latin music, such as salsa and Latin Jazz, and is sung primarily in Papiamentu. Although *tumba* is the only music heard during Carnaval, it is not the original version that can be heard throughout the year. The *tumba* that is used for Carnaval has a faster beat to accommodate the up-tempo of Carnaval.

Even though it was easy for the English Caribbean to assimilate their cultural norms into Aruban and Curaçaoan culture, other immigrants do not enjoy the same advantages. Their only connection to the Aruban/Curaçaoan culture is through their place of business since these are usually in or near the neighborhoods of the customers. Sometimes their traditions are often lost when their children and grandchildren are born on the island. The children become more assimilated to the Aruban and Curaçaoan identity than the culture of their parents. Because their outward appearance might not necessarily affirm them as an Aruban or a Curaçaoan, Papiamentu plays a big role in forming their identity. Deya Mensche gives an example:

I went to interview the spokesperson of the Chinese association something something and *yu'i Kòrsou yu'i Kòrsou*. She was Chinese as anything but she spoke a Papiamentu

like you know she was born and raised here. So she was made the spokesperson to go and speak to the press. And I told this girl, listen what's happening to you guys is an outrage but you know what's the problem, you always gave this Curaçao community this feeling that we're here to work and we don't want to be bothered. When you come into a community and you don't want to assimilate that's when you isolate yourself. And her eyes fell down. And she was like, "No we do care. I'm *yu'i Kòrsou*, *ami ta yu'i Kòrsou* (I'm Curaçaoan). I don't know anybody in China. This is home, this is home. So I know what you're saying but it's changing because we are born here and even though it seems like we don't care, it's not true because our parents made the decision to come and settle here and we are born here." That interview made a lot of impact in the community because we actually saw a Chinese *yu'i Kòrsou* identified herself as such. [Interview with author, July 14, 2009]

Deya Mensche interviewed this Chinese *yu'i Kòrsou* after there were a string of deaths related to Chinese restaurant/bars. She interviewed the head of this association to get the perspective of the Chinese that were living on the island. This quote symbolizes some of the struggles that second and third generation immigrants on the island have. Their outward appearance suggests that they're immigrants on the island, yet they might not have any connection with their family overseas. When this 'Chinese *yu'i Kòrsou*' spoke Papiamentu and identified herself as a *yu'i Kòrsou*, she was seen as a native not as a foreigner.

Papiamentu becomes a key identity marker for many immigrants and children of immigrants on both islands. Pharmacist Lady Bautista, 26, states:

Ku mi hendenan mes latino, mi ta gusta papia Papiamentu ku nan. Mi tin un kustumber ku bo a krese asina na Aruba, bo tin ku papia e idioma nò, mas ku ingles ku tur. Dependé ku ken bo ta tambe. Pero asina bo ta siña otro tambe pa kambia.

[With my Latino people, I like to speak Papiamentu with them. I have this custom that you were raised in Aruba, you have to speak the language, more than English and all the others. It depends on who you are with as well. But that is how you teach others to change.][Interview with author, July 27, 2009]

By speaking Papiamentu with others within her own Latino community, Bautista reaffirms her identity as an Aruban. Because she was born outside of the country, speaking Papiamentu in effect makes her an Aruban and not an immigrant who lives on the island.

Interestingly enough, people who emigrate from Aruba and Curaçao expressed the exact sentiments that immigrants believe about Papiamentu. Papiamentu serves as an identity marker for emigrants who live or study abroad. According to Deva-dee Siliee:

I definitely think it is a big part of our cultural identity because when I'm here (New York) and the primary thing that I feel, it's not necessarily I stand out or feel differently because of my color or because of how I look or because of my location in the Caribbean. Because if I was speaking English, I might be able to fit or feel more part of, for example, the US; but I feel the fact that I have a different language, it strengthens my cultural identity. It really strengthens the idea that I come from somewhere else; the idea that I have a heritage that is very different. So I feel that Papiamentu has given the ABC islands ... something to really build a stronger cultural identity and have something that binds everybody together. [Interview with author, November 28, 2009]

Once locals leave the islands, either for work or to study abroad, their cultural identity is taken with them. This includes the Papiamentu language. As Siliee states, by speaking Papiamentu, she is "strengthening her cultural identity" because it makes her unique in a big city where there are many different ethnicities present. She is no longer just a girl from the Caribbean; she is a girl from the island of Curaçao that has its own distinct foods, customs, and even language.

Papiamento vs. Papiamentu: The Ongoing Debate

Caller: Bon dia

Host: Bon dia

Caller: Mener, ami ta eigenlijk Rubiano pero mi ta biba hopi tempu na Kòrsou anto mi kier puntra algu. Wak, ora bo ta bisa "bo ta bai" nò, di kon ora mi ta bin te ki nan, òf ora nan ta bisa akinan na Kòrsou, "Mi ta stimabu", ta saka "bu". Esei ta unu pasobra ora nan ta bisa Minister Leitu miéntras ta Minister Leitu su fam ta.

Host: Leito

Caller: Nan ta bisa "konta bai" pero awó nan ta bisa "kon bai". I un otro kos tambe, ku tin biaha ta un tiki molestiá, ku nan ta *bezig* ta kambia Cuba; nan ta skibié ku un [k]. Esei no por nò?

[Caller: Good morning

Host: Good morning

Caller: Sir, I am actually an Aruban but I am living in Curaçao for a very long time and I want to ask something. Look, when you say "*bo ta bai*" (you are going), why is it when I come here, or when they say here in Curaçao, "*Mi ta stimabu*" (I love you); they say "*bu*" (you). That's one because they also say Minister *Leitu* while his last name is Minister *Leitu*.

Host: *Leito*

Caller: They say “*konta bai*” (how are you) but now they say “*kon bai*” (how are you). And another thing as well, that is a little frustrating sometimes, that they change Cuba; they spell it with a <k>. That’s not right, is it?]

This excerpt was taken from the Curaçaoan radio program “Mas Lat Mainta” (Much Later in the Morning) that airs from 11:00 a.m. to noon daily on Zet86. Since the topic on the show was Papiamentu, the guest was a well known linguist on the island. He discussed his position on the issues regarding the Papiamentu language. Throughout the show, callers had the opportunity to ask questions or make comments on a variety of topics within the context of the Papiamentu language. While a caller from Aruba spoke about what she felt were inaccuracies in the Curaçaoan Papiamentu, her accent was undoubtedly Curaçaoan. What was also interesting was that she ended the [ɔ] sounding words with an [u] sound. For instance, when she pronounced the Minister’s name to make a point, she pronounced it with the Curaçaoan [u] sound. The host had to repeat the minister’s name with an [ɔ] sound to make the caller’s point. Because she lived on the island for many years, her accent had indisputably changed from an Aruban accent to a Curaçaoan accent. While she denounced the usage of the [u] sound, she used it herself without realizing that she spoke with this accent marker.

Which is the correct dialect of the language? Is it Papiamentu, which can be heard spoken in Curaçao and Bonaire? Or is it Papiamento, which can be heard spoken in Aruba? Although both dialects are similar and are mutually comprehensible on all three islands, there are slight variations within the phonetics and orthography. For instance, in Aruba the word for *dark* is *skur* while *sukú* can be heard in Curaçao. In the orthography, the difference is evident in the spelling of the name of the language. Papiamento is how the language is spelled in Aruba while Papiamentu is how the language is spelled in Curaçao and Bonaire. As a result of the dialectal

variations of Papiamentu, an etymological orthography is used in Aruba while a phonological orthography is used in Curaçao and Bonaire.

The social constructions of each dialect can be heard throughout the islands because the debate is well known. Almost all of the interviewees, regardless of their educational backgrounds, incorporated the words *etymological* and *phonological* when answering questions about the different ways of speaking Papiamentu. If they weren't aware of the specific lexicon, they at least knew that Aruba tended to use more <c>s and end specific words with an <o>; while in Curaçao, they tended to use more <k>s and they end specific words with a <u>.

According to Edna Hooi-Béréños:

There are different styles, different words. Like Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao is different. Not only different in the way of saying the language but also the writing, the way they write. Aruba stayed with Latin, you know the <c> in front of an <a> and here it has been changed phonologically. So, we put the <k> in front of the <a>. With a <k>, you know *kaminda*, the road. So Aruba writes it with a <c> and we write it with a <k>. So that's the difference in the writing. But when I speak with someone from Aruba or Bonaire, we understand each other. [Interview with author July 16, 2009]

Even though the written form of Papiamentu might be slightly different, Hooi-Béréños notes that they can still understand each other when they speak. When they speak Papiamentu, there is more of a difference in accent not necessarily in dialectical variation. One consultant from Aruba stated (interview with author, August 10, 2009), “Nos ta bisa ku nan ta kanta, nan ta bisa ku nos ta yora Papiamentu. Tur tres ta papi'é ku un otro aksènt”. (We say that they sing; they say that we cry our Papiamentu. All three (islands) speak with an accent.) This opinion is often spoken a lot on both islands, although the “we cry our Papiamentu” is rarely used. When the interviewees were asked how the Papiamentu would sound from the other island, almost instantly someone would say that the other island sounds like they are singing. This perception

is interesting because it is based entirely on what is perceived as the “standard” accent. All “nonstandard” accents will sound like singing.

Historical perceptions of the origin of the language are what helped to create the dichotomy within the Papiamentu orthographies. There is a general belief in Aruba that the lexicon of Papiamentu came primarily from the Spanish language with other influences such as Portuguese entering into the language later. Although this is not the universal consensus among all Arubans, this is what influenced the orthography to have the etymology of the lexicon come primarily from Spanish rather than Portuguese. This can be seen in words such as *manipulacion* (manipulation) and *cas* (house). There are some on the island who do feel that the lexicon of Papiamentu came from Portuguese. Theodoor de Jong says:

E Papiamentu, hopi biaha den mi trabou nos ta bisa ku e ta eigenlijk un *melting pot* di diferente idioma. Hopi hende ta bisa ku e ta mas *closely related to Spanish*, pero di eksperensia mi ta bisa e ta mas *closely related to the Portuguese* ku nan ta papia den na Brasil ku e spañó ku nan ta papia por ehèmpel na Venezuela.

[The Papiamentu, a lot of times at my job, we say that actually it is a melting pot of different languages. A lot of people say that it is closely related to Spanish, but due to experience, I say it is closely related to the Portuguese that they speak in Brazil than the Spanish that they speak, for example, in Venezuela.][Interview with author, August 5, 2009]

Although there are some people on the island that have divergent opinions about the genesis of the language, Papiamentu is still generally written with the etymological orthography in mind.

In Curaçao and Bonaire, on the other hand, it is the common perception that Papiamentu came from an Afro-Portuguese creole that originated in Africa. Lexical borrowings from other languages such as Spanish and Dutch entered into Papiamentu once it reached the islands. For reasons that are not clear, a phonological system was put in place where the lexicon was spelled the way it was pronounced. This can be seen in words such as *manipulashon* (manipulation) and *kas* (house).

The slight lexical differences between Aruba and Curaçao are distinctive for locals on both islands. Karen van Blarcum, states,

Si bo bisa manera nos ta bisa, nos ta usa e palabra pinda en general pa tur sortu di pinda. Anto si bo ke spesífikamente bo ta bisa pinda *dus* kashu, pistacho, òf so. Ora bo ta bisa pinda, e ta e palabra general; òf e por ta spesífikamente pinda, ya i no kashu òf. Na Kòrsou nan ta bisa *nechi*, ke men e ta un palabra totalmente otro ku bo no ta rekonosé. Na Ruba nan ta bisa *strena ku lamper* i na Kòrsou nan ta bisa *dònder ku welek*. [If you say like we say, we use the word *pinda* (nut) in general for all sorts of nuts. And if you want something specifically, you say peanut, cashew, pistachio, or whatever. When you say peanut, it can be the general term or specifically peanut, not cashew. In Curaçao, they say *nechi* (nut), meaning it is a completely different word that you cannot recognize. In Aruba, they say *strena ku lamper* (thunder and lightning) and in Curaçao they say *dònder ku welek* (thunder and lightning).][Interview with author, August 7, 2009]

These lexical dissimilarities are what make each island unique in comparison to each other. A word like *nechi* would not be recognized in Aruba as the word for *peanut*. It would be recognized as the word for *pretty*. Curaçao also uses this word for pretty, but through their orthography it is written as *nèchi*. There is no explanation as to why there are variations in the lexicon of both Aruban Papiamentu and Curaçaoan Papiamentu, but a possible explanation could be that it is due to the influence of the European languages that were dominant on both islands. A language such as Dutch, for example, had more influence in Curaçao than it did in Aruba due to the presence of more Dutch people on the island. These lexical variations further strengthen the unique identities of both Arubans and Curaçaoans. Although they have a shared history, this makes them unique in their own right. Even though there are two official orthographies, the spoken discourses are based on regional differences rather than island differences.

Papiamentu and Papiamentu Speech Communities

The dialectical variances are not limited to just the islands. They are extended to the different communities that are present in Aruba and Curaçao. Not only are there certain lexical

differences that are specific to one speech community, but the accent that accompanies their speech discourse also helps to add to the charm of the neighborhood. These differences can be attributed to the history behind these specific communities. For instance, certain neighborhoods were inhabited by various cultures due to the oil boom, while others towns were populated because of their proximity to the sea and its resources. Each town has its own unique story along with their unique accent.

In Aruba, there are various neighborhoods that have their unique way of speaking. As Diana Antonette states:

Nan (Santa Cruz) ta usa otro palabranan. Si, e palabra ta poko kambiá. Einan ma ripara, bo sa bo ta tenta otro. Mané mi ta duna un *voorbeld*, *jeans*. Abo ta bisa asina ahá *jeans*. Nan ta bisa *jeams*. *Um met een /m/*.

[They (Santa Cruz) use other words. Yes, the word changes a little. Over there I noticed, we tease each other. I'll give you an example, jeans. You say jeans. They say *jeams*, with a /m/.][Interview with author, August 5, 2009]

Small variations such as this reflect specifically speech communities. There is nowhere else on the island that a word such as *jeams* will be heard. Another example exists in the town of San Nicholaas. Due to the high percentage of English Caribbean immigrants and their descendants residing in the area, many local words are of English origin. Their accent is also one of the most distinct accents present in Papiamentu, and can be heard especially in the speech of the first generation locals. By the second generation, the accent starts to diminish. The social dichotomy between these two generations can be attributed to the loss of the accent. San Nicholaas was the economic hub for the island during the boom from the oil industry in the era of the first generation. Due to San Nicholaas being the main economic hub for the island, there wasn't any real need to venture to other parts of the island. Due to this, there wasn't any real need to venture to other parts of the island. Everything was situated in San Nicholaas. These specific immigrants learned Papiamentu, but there was no real need to speak it since mostly everyone

there spoke English. By the time the second and third generations of locals were being brought up, the social and economic scene shifted from San Nicholaas to Oranjestad and the northern part of the island. The hottest clubs, advanced schools, such as Colegio Arubano, and opportunities for economic success were located in Oranjestad and the northern part of the island. Aruba had turned from an oil refinery economy to a tourist economy. Cruise ships docked at the port in Oranjestad, while the hotel industry was built along the northwestern coast of the island. These second and third generations had more contact with people outside of the English speaking community. Due to their extensive contact with the rest of the island, their English Caribbean accent lessened. While the accent is still present, it is not as strong as among the generation that came before them.

Curaçao is similar to Aruba in that accents and dialectical differences are regionally based. Although, unlike like towns such as San Nicholaas in Aruba, neighborhoods in Curaçao were well established for a long time. One of the most notable areas that many of the consultants mentioned throughout the interviews was Boka Samí. Boka Samí is a fishing village on the southwestern coast of the island, near the capital of Willemstad. According to Blimutsa Tielman, 42, hair dresser:

Mané bo sa bo mester konosé e hendenan di Boka; nan ta papia otro. Pero nan tin nan stail di papia mané kòrta palabra; nan ta guli palabranan, e hendenan di Boka.
[Like you have to know the people from Boka; they speak different. But they have their style of speaking like cutting off words; the swallow their words, the people of Boka.][Interview with author, July 23, 2009]

As Tielman noted, people from this fisherman village have their own distinct way of speaking. It is what defines them not only as a Curaçaoan, but as persons from Boka Samí. But like San Nicholaas, the youth are losing their ‘Boka’ way of speaking. As Deva-dee Siliee notes (interview with author, November 28, 2009) that many of the young adults and teenagers are not

staying in Boka to become fishermen, but are, instead venturing out to other parts of the island; this age group is losing their specific style of speech.

On the island itself, there are also different phrases that are unmistakable tied to specific places. Edna Hooi-Béréños states:

It's the place you live, like someone from Boka Samí speaks another Papiamentu. And someone from Bándariba is something else again. And the people close to town is something else again. The same words but you know, the intonation or using different things like some people, the ones from Punda will say "Si no mi ta bai". Someone from Bándabou will say "Fo no". [Interview with author, July 16, 2009]

These variations contribute to the cultural identities of Arubans and Curaçaoans. For instance, saying "Fo no mi ta bai" is something distinct to Bándabou. Whether it is considered correct or incorrect according to the orthography, this Bándabou expression adds even more zest to the speech characteristics of the people who reside there. While many of these accents and expressions might be dying out due to opportunities outside of the communities, they will forever be the cultural identity marker specific to these neighborhoods.

There are obvious speech communities that everyone notices on the islands and there are also different speech registers in Papiamentu: the *nechi* (nice) Papiamentu versus the *brutu* (rough) Papiamentu. Yithza Davelaar, 33, manager, states:

Si, tin un manera mas *nechus* anto un manera mas brutu, mas di kaya. *Voraal* ta mané *laatweg* lèters. *Maner* ami ta bisa kas otro hende ta bisa *ka*, asin'ei. "Mi ta bai *ka* bin". Anto ami ta bisa "mi ta bai kas bin".
[Yes, there is a nicer way and a rougher way, more from the street. Especially like leaving letters out. For instance, I say *kas* (home); other people say *ka* (home), like that. "Mi ta bai *ka* bin" (I am going home). And I say "Mi ta bai kas bin" (I am going home).][Interview with author, July 7, 2009]

Like many other creole languages in the Caribbean, there are different ways of speaking a language depending on the situation. Although this is usually seen as urban versus rural speech

patterns; in Aruba and Curaçao the “mas brutu” (rougher) way of speaking is considered slang. The slang is usually attributed to the younger generation, primarily teenagers and young adults.

There are other instances, where generational differences are evident in Papiamentu.

Ashanti Benjamin notes:

My father and my mother the way they speak Papiamentu is better than when I speak Papiamentu because I grew up in an age when it is a little bit more with the Dutch and the English combined. So my Papiamentu is not like I can say a sentence, a whole sentence in Papiamentu. You get the Dutch and the English in it when I speak Papiamentu. But you get the younger generation and now they have like *se* and *onix* and a lot of things. They understand each other but sometimes I have like, “What are you saying; I can’t understand what you are saying”. [Interview with author, July 16, 2009]

Lexical borrowings from Dutch and English depend on the speaker’s age. As Benjamin noted, the usage of Dutch and English within Papiamentu is more prevalent in the mid-twenties to late-thirties age group. The younger generation, which consists mainly of teenagers, is more inclined to use words such as *se* and *onix*. *Se* is a slang term in Papiamentu for the word *yeah*. *Onix* is the slang term equivalent to the word *cool*. Ashanti Benjamin states (interview author, July 16, 2009) that *onix* could possibly be derived from the word *on*. Languages such as English and Dutch still have an influence on the Papiamentu of the youth. Although they are more inclined to speak the English language rather than use it within their Papiamentu, there are still additives of a language such as English within the youths’ versions of Papiamentu. Phrases such as “*Bo ta riba e road*” (Are you on your way) and “*Mi ta bai pin bo*²³” (I am going to pin you) can be heard throughout the island.

Discussion

Papiamentu is an identity marker for many in Aruba and Curaçao that helps to define who they are as locals on the islands. For immigrants, this not only gives them a sense of

²³ This is referring to messaging via blackberry pin messenger.

belonging but it also helps them to be considered Aruban or Curaçaoan. Not only has the language as a whole given a sense of nationhood, dialectal variations help to further provide unique characteristics that are distinct to each speech community or neighborhood.

Language ideology is the force behind the differences within the island dialects and orthographies of the Papiamentu language. Neither the orthography from Aruba nor the orthography from Curaçao is considered the ‘real’ Papiamentu. There has been a general consensus that each dialect of Papiamentu spoken and the orthography utilized are the correct ones in their respective islands.

Is Papiamentu considered an important part of the cultural make-up of the islands? Almost all of the participants who took part in the study expressed that Papiamentu is either an integral part or that the language is the core of their culture. Papiamentu is what makes them distinct from other islands in the Caribbean. It gives them their sense of nationhood.

Creole languages, such as Papiamentu, are identity markers that help to distance Caribbean islands from their colonial past by giving them something that is their own. Even though the lexifier’s language will forever be embedded within these creoles, by creating their own language, they are able to gain a new identity without being associated directly with their former colonizers. Bambi Schieffelin and Rachelle Doucet note in their article about Haitian Kreyòl, “It is about the conception of Kreyòl itself as a language and as an element of Haitian national identity, about how Haitians situate themselves through languages at the national and international levels, and about the notion of Haitianness, authenticity, nationalism, and legitimacy” (1994:188). Like Kreyòl, Papiamentu as a language contributes to the national identity of Arubans and Curaçaoans. But while the ideology behind Papiamentu as a cultural element maybe positive, the dogmatic beliefs behind its use in specific areas are starkly

contrasted. The social implications behind its usage outside of unprofessional settings help to contribute to its minimal usage with education and other facets of the islands. It may be seen as a language but it is often seen as a language that is not complete. Therefore in comparison to a well established language such as Dutch, it might often be deemed as inferior.

This notion of inferiority has historical implications that deemed Papiamentu as an inferior language in comparison to Dutch. This perception has been carried on to the present day and it can be viewed in major areas such as education. What is even more interesting is that, unlike other Caribbean islands, Papiamentu was not spoken only by the lower class masses. It was the mother tongue of the people of Aruba and Curaçao. Since Papiamentu is purported to be an integral part of the national identity of both Aruba and Curaçao, why is there a sense of inferiority about using Papiamentu, or does that attitude exist only in specific venues of the society, such as education? With the resurgence of cultural practices on both Aruba and Curaçao, a sense of pride in their identity is being restored and, with it, there has been further development of the language that embodies their Arubanness and Curaçaoanness.

CHAPTER FOUR: PAPIAMENTU IN EDUCATION

Introduction

“The stated and unstated attitudes toward creoles held by those who plan and carry out educational policies in the West Indies have a profound effect on the quality of education experienced by children in creole speaking areas” (Kephart 1992:68). As Kephart stated, negative or positive attitudes of policy makers towards creole languages strongly influence whether these vernaculars are used in education. Their attitudes are habitually fueled by historical and political hegemonic forces that compare their perceptions of these creoles to standard languages such as English or French. Because these are the same people in charge of the educational programs, their opinions are frequently viewed as the correct ones. Creoles, such as Trinidadian Creole English, are often praised for their cultural significance, but are regularly employed in educational settings (if they are in education at all) as languages of assistance. They are typically regarded as languages that will not help but hinder a child’s success in education and elsewhere.

While Papiamentu has similar issues that many creoles around the world face, such as not being incorporated fully into the educational setting, it slightly differs from other creoles since it starkly contrasts with the official language of the school system. For instance, Kreyòl, in Haiti, and Tok Pisin, in Papua New Guinea are used in primary education. Each of these languages lexically resembles the other official languages in their country, French and English, respectively. Papiamentu, however, shares minimal lexical elements with Dutch, the official language of instruction in the ABC island schools since the 1800s. This presents a challenging issue in the educational system of ABC islands, not existent with the other creoles mentioned.

While students do receive instruction in Papiamentu as a language arts class at the primary level, they are still placed in a situation where they have to learn in an unfamiliar language. This alienates the children from their mother tongue in favor of a language that they have never heard before. Not only does this take away from their mode of communication, it further detaches the children from their culture. As stated in the previous chapter, Papiamentu is an integral part of the culture of Aruba and Curaçao. If a language, that is culturally relevant, is taken away from a child at a young age, there can be adverse repercussions. For instance, it can lead to low self-esteem or feeling unintelligent. While this might not be the case with all children, it can be noted that children tend to perform at lower levels when they are not taught in their mother tongue (Siegal 1999:509-511). For instance, the last census in Curaçao indicated that between the ages of 15-24, 45.2 percent of students dropped out of school. Similar results were found in Aruba. While dropout rates are high in Aruba and Curaçao, illiteracy rates are low. According to the 2001 census in Curaçao, only 3.6 percent of the population was illiterate. The 2000 census in Aruba indicated that only 2.6 percent of the population was illiterate. This indicates that people are probably not dropping out because of their intelligence level. Other factors are attributed to the dropout rates in Aruba and Curaçao.

While statistics cannot prove conclusively that the present language of instruction is a reason that contributes to these rates, they do present a startling problem. Almost half of the population, between the ages of 15-24, drops out of school in Curaçao. What are the reasons underlying this? High dropout rates are a recent phenomenon. There is a dichotomy in dropout rates between the generations over thirty-five and the generations under thirty-five. It seems that once Papiamentu entered the educational system as an assistance language with the changes that came in the eighties, and with slight variations throughout the nineties and early 2000s, problems

such as repetition of grade levels, as well as dropout rates, increased. This led to the perception and the labeling of children as lazy because of their comparison to their parents and the previous generations.

Historical Roles of Dutch and Papiamentu Languages in the School

Initially, Papiamentu was the language of instruction in the educational systems of Aruba and Curaçao. When the missionaries from Venezuela came to the islands, they took on the task of educating the indigenous and enslaved populations in Aruba and Curaçao. Since there was a policy of using the indigenous language of the people they were educating, the Venezuelan missionaries used textbooks and catechism books that were written in Papiamentu. They also set up a grammar list and vocabulary list for incoming missionaries to learn Papiamentu at an accelerated rate. Bachmann states:

The substantial output of texts probably led to reflections about on [sic] the spelling of Papiamentu, because in the second half of the nineteenth century, we can observe a normative effort by Bishop Ewijk to produce a more coherent orthography. He modified the strictly Dutch spelling of the early texts and considered etymological considerations. Through word lists and a grammar, he tried to establish a spelling system that combined elements from Dutch and Spanish orthography [2006: 83; Smeulders 1987:50]

By using these languages together within the orthography, Ewijk was able to utilize familiar languages in order to make Papiamentu more accessible.

The children of the enslaved and indigenous people were also attending the same schools as the Dutch children. Communication was possible since Dutch children learned Papiamentu from their *yayanan*.²⁴ Frank Martinus Arion states:

Following this Papiamentu trail back to the beginning of the nineteenth century shows that the language moved from the fields into the Big Houses—not the other way around—and reveals that something completely different from the superficially apparent must have taken place in the creolization process of the Netherlands Antilles. [1998: 113-114]

²⁴ *Yaya* is the term for the nannies that took care of the Dutch children.

Since the children and wives of the Dutch men were interacting primarily with the *yayanan*, they spoke more Papiamentu than the Dutch language. It was even noted that Papiamentu was associated with the Dutch elite who lived on the islands (Bachmann 2007:89). Speaking this language is what identified them as *criollos* or creoles on the island. When then director of education, Gerrit Gijsbert van Paddenburgh, saw that Papiamentu was used more than Dutch, he petitioned for Dutch to have a more prominent role within the colonies. By 1819, a law was introduced to establish Dutch as the language of instruction. Even though, Dutch became the language of instruction, there was still no general use for it outside of the educational system.

The use of the Dutch language continued to decline steadily until the early 1900s when the oil refineries came to Aruba and Curaçao. Once the refineries came to the islands and the Dutch government took control of the educational systems, Dutch became the only language used. Children were not allowed to speak Papiamentu, even during their breaks. Dutch was to be used ‘as much as possible.’ Sandra Robles-Celestina, 60, school teacher, noted:

Na skol nos no tabata tin mag di papia Papiamentu pasobra nos ta den un *koninkrijk*. Bo sa ki ta *koninkrijk*? *Koninkrijk* ta un reinado. Anto e reinado ta konsistí di vários pais, anto nos ta e kolonial di reinado. Tempü ei ya nos tabata prohibí pa papia Papiamentu na skol. Anto nos no a *siñ'é'le* tampoko.

[At school, we were not allowed to speak Papiamentu because we are in a *koninkrijk*. Do you know what a *koninkrijk* is? *Koninkrijk* is a kingdom. And the kingdom consists of various countries and we are the colony of the kingdom. In those times, we were prohibited from speaking Papiamentu at school. Moreover, we did not learn it either.][Interview with author, August 8, 2009]

This “as much as possible” policy led to an increase of additives of the Dutch language within Papiamentu since children were forced to speak more Dutch than their parents (Fouse 2002:143-147).

Education in Aruba and Curaçao followed the educational system that was implemented in the Netherlands. This included *kleuterschool* (kindergarten) and *lagere school* (primary

school). Children would go through primary education until they were twelve years old and then continue on to different educational systems depending on their level of intelligence. The different systems included *ITO* (Individual Technical Training), *MULO* (*Meer Uitgebreid Lager Onderwijs*), *HBS* (*Hogere Burgerschool*), and *MMS* (*Middelbare Meisjesschool*). *ITO* was comparable to a technical training school where students attended from twelve years of age to sixteen years of age. Children who were average students went to *MULO* between the ages of twelve to sixteen. If the students were above average, they could be tested to be admitted to *HBS* and *MMS*. They would go to either of these schools between the ages of twelve to seventeen. *MMS* was an all girls' school while *HBS* was a mixed school. If the student was exceptionally bright, he or she could be sent to *Gymnasium* in The Netherlands, which was a type of school for the gifted. These students would go to Holland at age twelve and finish at eighteen. They would then have the option to stay and further their education at the University level in Holland or go back to Aruba and Curaçao to work. Although this educational system was considered as one of the best systems the islands ever had, presently, the generations who matriculated through that system cannot formulate a full sentence in Papiamentu. This educational system also did not teach the cultural history of the islands, instead only teaching the history of The Netherlands.

There are mixed reactions towards the educational system described above. There is a consensus from the generations who went through this system that it worked well. There is the sense throughout the islands that through this system, they were able to learn languages such as Dutch and Spanish fluently. For instance, Rogoczy Pedro, 21, student, stated:

They are (older generations that went through the old school system) fluent in Spanish, they are fluent in Dutch, they are fluent in English so they have proficiency, they have a real proficiency in those languages. And that is the edge of people living on Curaçao; they have their proficiency in different languages. I noticed that now, according to today, this system that they have, they are not proficient, they are not fluent enough in those languages, you know. And I think it is the system. [Interview with author, July 28, 2009]

Pedro, who is in his early twenties, noted that the previous system was effective in teaching the different languages that were present on the islands. Like Pedro, many people use this system to compare to later educational systems on the islands. The educational system called MULO, which consisted of middle and high school, was taught entirely by teachers who were from Holland or Suriname. The few teachers who were not from Holland or Suriname were usually language teachers. Although this system worked for learning other languages, it denigrated Papiamentu. A consultant noted:

Paso e ta nos eksperensia, tempu ku nos a bai skol...promé dia ma tende hulandes *out of nowhere*. Esei tabata klik mes kos ku chines. Bo ta siña *the hard way*, kon pa papia hulandes. Pero tòg mi ta kere bo mester desaroyá bo propio idioma tambe. *Dus*, hopi hende no ta dominá Papiamentu bon. Si bo wak mi mes ora mi papia mi ta usa hopi palabra òf ingles or hulandes paso e tin e influensia di e edukashon ku nos a haña. [Because it is our experience, the time we went to school...the first day I heard Dutch out of nowhere. It sounded just like Chinese. You learn how to speak Dutch the hard way. But I still think that you have to improve your own language too. So, not a lot of people can dominate Papiamentu well. If you see me, when I speak, I use a lot of English or Dutch because it is the influence that we got from school.][Interview with author, August 10, 2009]

Many of this generation that went through the MULO system cannot speak Papiamentu effectively without using additives from the Dutch or English language. Others who went through this system but took it upon themselves to learn Papiamentu by learning about the history have a different opinion about this system. Elia Isenia noted:

Si nan a lagami papia mi Papiamentu anto siñami e idiomanan otro, lo mi tabata doctorandus aworakí. Pero a matami, a kibrami, straf mi por nada, pa motibu di mi lenga. Anto lagami hinka rudia dilanti un busto, un santu ku tin den solo kayente pa mi idioma. Bo ta dunami mas rabia riba e idioma ku bo ke pa mi siña anto mi ta haña mas amor pa esun di mi paso mi ta keda para fuerte i firme ku mi no ta bandonábo Papiamentu. Tin ora mi ta papia, mi ta emoshoná, pasombra ta hopi nos a wòrdu trapá pa papia hulandes; ku hulandes bo no por bai niun kaminda ku n'e ku ta Hulanda so. Anto laga nan bisami Papiamentu tampoko. Pero sikiera mi lenga materno mi ta siña tur otro idioma i na Kòrsou nos ta asina beaku ku nos por papia mas òf sikiera komprondé mas ku kuater idioma.

[If they would have let me speak my Papiamentu and taught me the other languages differently, I would have had a doctorate right now. But they killed me, broke me, put me on punishment for nothing, just because of my language. And told me to kneel down in front of a bust, a saint in the hot sun because of my language. You give me more anger towards the language that you want me to learn and I have more love for my own language because I stand strong and firm that I will not abandon you Papiamentu. Sometimes I speak with emotion because we were trapped to speak Dutch; with Dutch, you can't go anywhere unless it's Holland. And, let them tell me that I can't go anywhere with Papiamentu either. At least in my mother tongue, I can learn other languages and in Curaçao, we are so versatile that we can speak or least understand more than four languages.][Interview with author, July 20, 2009]

Through this older system, negative implications were placed on Papiamentu that made Papiamentu seem inferior compared to Dutch. Because Papiamentu is only spoken in Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao, some believe that it limits a child's potential to learn in that language. Nevertheless, as Isenia noted, Papiamentu is comprised of five European languages. It acts as a catalyst for learning the other European languages that are used on the islands.

Present Debate Regarding Papiamentu Use in Education

Presently, Papiamentu is used in education, but only as a support language. What this means is that Dutch remains the language of instruction and Papiamentu is used when the child cannot comprehend what is being said in Dutch. Papiamentu is also taught a half hour each day as a language arts class in primary schools. Students in primary schools are able to learn the standard orthography of Papiamentu that is mandated for both islands. Students in Aruba learn the etymological orthography while in Curaçao students learn the phonological orthography.

By the late 1960s, The Netherlands changed from the previous system that was mentioned to the *Mammoetwet* (literally meaning the Mammoth Act) system. This system consisted of *Huishoudschool* or *LTS*, *VBO* (*Vorbereidend Beroepsonderwijs*), which was in Curaçao, *MAVO* (*Middelbaar Algemeen Voortgezet Onderwijs*), *HAVO* (*Hoger Algemeen*

Voortgezet Onderwijs), and *VWO* (*Voorbereidend Wetenschappelijk Onderwijs*). Kindergarten and primary school stayed the same as the previous system. The only difference was that Papiamentu was introduced as an assistance language in kindergarten and primary school. *Huishoudschool* became a school that focused on home economics, which was equivalent to *ITO*. Students were taught how to sew, cook, and take care of a home. *VBO* in Curaçao focused on vocational training for students who did not or could not continue with the regular education such as the sciences, mathematics, and history. *MAVO* was for average students while *HAVO* was for the above average students. *VWO* became like the *Gymnasium* system that was in Holland except that it now was in Aruba and Curaçao. Children who were highly intelligent went to *VWO*. Students were administered a test in order to be admitted into the different systems.

The *Mammoetwet* system was changed slightly since its beginnings. By the 1990s, some of the divisions in the *Mammoetwet* system were altered to the present system that they have now. In Aruba, the only change that occurred was that *Huishoudschool* became *EPB* (*Educacion Profesional Basico*). *EPB* is a combination of technical instruction and regular education. Instead of teaching students how to become homemakers, its studies are directed towards vocational training. In Curaçao, the only change that occurred was that *VBO* and *MAVO* were fused together to create *VMBO* (*Voorbereidend Middelbaar Beroepsonderwijs*). *VMBO* combined vocational training with the regular educational subjects. Each of these systems in the *Mammoetwet* system has different levels to meet the children's specific need. Because of this, when Papiamentu was briefly introduced as the language of instruction, the system ultimately failed. Deya Mensche describes what happened to the educational system in Curaçao:

Look there is a big controversy on this subject and I think the government made some crucial mistakes when introducing Papiamentu as an educational language. When the

Dutch system changed from the *Mammoet* system, which is *VWO*, *HAVO*, *MAVO*, *Huishoudschool* and that division to what they have now which is the *VMBO*, that became a mess, even for Holland. So what happened in Holland, when that system didn't work out, they reversed it back to the *Mammoet* system. Yet they implemented those changes here in Curaçao. While they incorporated those changes, they decided that they're going to teach in Papiamentu. There weren't any educational tools in Papiamentu; no books. And I don't know which bighead decided to introduce a language with no books, but the result of that is a generation that was taught in Papiamentu verbally but had to read it in Dutch because the textbooks were in Dutch. The tests were in Dutch and that created a lot of problems and a lot of dropouts. And we are going to see the remnants of that mess because it was introduced the year after I graduated, which is 2000. So I was the last school year that went to school in its traditional *Mammoet* system. So the people who were against Papiamentu started blaming Papiamentu. "Yes, Papiamentu isn't good and they want our children to resort to Dutch because Dutch is better", which is major crap. But because there wasn't the proper preparation, textbooks, literature. Look, for you to change a language of an educational system, you need to prepare. You need to give it chance, you need to order translations of the textbooks and that thing cost millions. I don't know what they were thinking, by God I don't know what they were thinking. *Basis* for me was a success. Now, that's the elementary school kids who are taught fully in Papiamentu and then get Dutch just like how we got English and Spanish, they get Dutch like as a second language. But where do they hit a stumbling block; in high school because high school is a chaos. No textbooks and because they are so many divisions in high school, you need a textbook for every division. Look let me give you an example. If I was an average student and I went to MAVO, in elementary I was taught in Dutch and you expect me to go to college in Spain, I would have a culture shock. Let's be real here because Spanish is not my first language. My Spanish is good, don't get me wrong, but there is adjustment period and there is intelligence requirement for me to make that switch. So, when they decided to make that switch to Papiamentu without the proper preparations, they did not anticipate the students that could not continue having their university education in Dutch or in English or in Spanish. [Interview with author, July 14, 2009]

As Mensche mentions, students can attend different divisions based on their specific abilities.

Each division is divided into specific levels based on the child's learning capacity. This creates a problem when Papiamentu is introduced as the language of instruction because each division and subdivision would need its own specific textbooks. They would also need their own tests since the current tests come directly from The Netherlands. This would take a lot of time and money, which is why many parents were against Papiamentu as the language of instruction. The language of instruction in the educational system was switched without the necessary tools to

make it work. So, in effect, people blamed Papiamentu because they equated the failure of the school system with the language.

Another argument made is that some students would not be adequately prepared to make that transition from a Papiamentu education to a Dutch education at the university level. Diana Antonette stated:

Aunke nan ta bringando; oké mi sa ku Papiamentu a drenta skol básiko. Mi ta kontentu pero mi ta ripara ku hulandes a bai hopi atras. Ke men, no lubidá di gran parti di nos studiantenan ta bai Hulanda.

[Even though they are fighting for it; ok I know Papiamentu is in elementary school. I am happy for it but I noticed that they are lacking in Dutch. Meaning, do not forget a bulk of our students go to Holland.][Interview with author, August 5, 2009]

This is the biggest fear that many parents have about their children. Since a majority of the students from Aruba and Curaçao go to The Netherlands for their university education, there is a need for a proficiency in Dutch. Many parents and some young adults believe that if students are not taught fully in Dutch, then they will not be fluent in the language when they go off to college. Since the parents' generations were taught exclusively in Dutch, and they left school with a real proficiency in the language, they fall back on supporting the only system they know that worked. Although this system hindered their proficiency in Papiamentu, they saw their fluency in Dutch as a catalyst for success. Some even note that they have a proficiency in Papiamentu, despite their inclusion of words from other languages in their Papiamentu. To them, this is not seen as a hindrance but rather a positive element of their way of life.

Perceptions of Papiamentu Use in Education

In education, I think it can help our children express themselves. It can help them connect family life to education and just give a sense of well being, a sense of the personality, of who they are and it doesn't have to mean ok I speak this language and I come from a small island. It could mean I'm a global citizen; I can learn biochemical

engineering and still speak Papiamentu. So I think we should stop viewing it as a sort of a dead end. [Interview with author, November 28, 2009]

Deva-dee Siliee expressed these sentiments about the lack of Papiamentu in the educational system. She offers a positive perspective on a topic that typically has a negative connotation. Papiamentu is sometimes viewed as a dead end because there is a minute amount of speakers of this language. Indeed, it is not a global language, but it is still the mother tongue of the majority of speakers in Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao. It is a part of their identity; how they are able to convey their emotions and articulate best. When asked why Papiamentu should be in the school, Cindy Martinus, 28, front office assistant stated:

Pa siña *pronustik'e* mas mehor anto skirbié kualkier un parti hopi importante pasobra mayoria di nos por papi'é pero no skibié echt bon. Hasiendo ku te den stail di *MAUnan*; nan duna nos lès den Papiamentu. *Van het begin en Basis*, ku esenan nan por a tin un base den kon Papiamentu mes ta.

[To learn how to pronounce it better and write, which is an important part because most of us can speak it but cannot write it well. They should do it in the style of *MAU*; we were given Papiamentu lessons. They should do it from the beginning in *Basis*, so that they could have a base in how Papiamentu has to be.][Interview with author, August 10, 2009]

As Martinus later explained, *MAU* is a division that is similar to *MBO (Middelbaar Beroepsonderwijs)*. *MBO* is equivalent to the technical colleges found in the United States. This is where many students begin to get Papiamentu classes. By this time, it is difficult for students to comprehend fully the standard syntax and lexicon of Papiamentu since they are already accustomed to their own style of writing. In addition, when they try to correlate the standard orthography to their style of writing, it is often difficult to adapt.

By learning Papiamentu in primary schools, beginning at a young age, students can become accustomed to the standard syntax and orthographies of Aruba and Curaçao. Juhaily Cornet, 24, hotel worker, stated, “Tin hende ta skibi diferente...Si e ta den skol, e ora ei nos tin un liña ku tur hende ta *skibié'le* mes kos.” (There are people that write differently...If it is in

school, then there will be a guideline that everyone will write it the same)(Interview with author, July 16, 2009).

Many of the opinions about the use of Papiamentu in school are centered on a middle ground. Among most of the interviewees, there was an assessment that both Papiamentu and Dutch should be included in the educational system. These notions ranged from having Dutch as the language of instruction to Papiamentu as the language of instruction. The variety of viewpoints demonstrates the true diversity on the issue of whether Papiamentu should be in schools or not. For instance, Cenika Daal, 43, temp agency consultant, stated:

Mi ta kere, si, mester bin ku n'e (Papiamentu), pero nos mester organis'é bon ku tur kos. Sea tur kos ta keda Papiamentu òf tur kos ta keda hulandes anto usa al vak; ke men komo un lès, mes kos ku bo ta haña *rekenen*.

[I think, yes, they have to bring it (Papiamentu), but they have to organize all of it well. Either everything stays in Papiamentu or everything stays in Dutch and have one of them as a subject; like a lesson, just like you get mathematics.][Interview with author, July 15, 2009]

Although in elementary school students get Papiamentu as a subject, once they leave primary school they no longer receive Papiamentu instruction. As Daal states, organization is key to implementing Papiamentu into the educational system. There is a need for adequate educational materials written in Papiamentu. In addition, there is a need to establish guidelines that show how to effectively use both Papiamentu and Dutch in the school system.

Another common perception was that Papiamentu should be incorporated due to the lack of use by students in the current school system. For example, an interviewee noted, "It's good to have in the educational system so the young kids know the roots of where they came from because right now you see a lot of teenagers, they don't want to speak Papiamentu. They want to be hip; they want to speak English or Dutch" (interview with author, August 10, 2009). There is a cultural aspect to placing Papiamentu into the educational system. As noted before by another

consultant, Ashanti Benjamin, speaking another language such as English or Dutch is popular among the youth in Aruba and Curaçao. Adding Papiamentu into the educational system reinforces a cultural pride in the language and the people.

Another sentiment expressed that points out Papiamentu's cultural significance in education is the style of writing. According to Sandra Robles-Celestina stated:

Ami por skibi mi propio idioma; mi no por ekspresá mi mes na drechi den e idioma ku ta ni sali. I tambe mi ta haña ku e ta *yamer* di islanan a wòrdu manipulá pa tin diferente punto di bista tokante manera kon pa skibi e Papiamentu. E ta un manipulashon masha sutil ku a tuma logá i asina a pone ku e islanan ta *frakshonalisa* ku e manera kon nan ta ekspresá in *writing* e Papiamentu. Esun ku ta tin un *hand on it*, patras di kortina, i e hendenan mes no ta ripara. Ta ora bo hasi investigashon, kon bini e dos islanan tin diferente ekspreshon riba papel di e mes un idioma anto e ora bo ta mira e man di Hulanda patras. E tabata un *verdeel en heers politiek*. *Divide and conquered, because it's already conquered.*

[I can write my own language; I cannot express myself well in the language that comes out. And I also find that it's a shame that the islands were manipulated to have different points of views on how to write Papiamentu. It was a subtle manipulation that took place and that is what fractured the islands in how they express Papiamentu in writing. Others had their hand in it, behind the curtain, and the people themselves do not realize it. Only when you do an investigation on why the two islands have different expressions on paper of the same language and that is when you see the hand of Holland behind it. It was a *verdeel i heers politiek*. Divide and conquered because it's already conquered.]

[Interview with author, August 8, 2009]

When asked what can be done about this in education, she noted:

Nan mester hasi, no, promé nan mester bira *aware*. *You need to become aware of so many things in order to put your finger on it; what are the causes of the problems.* Awó, si bo no ta buska *causes of the problems* anto bo ta keda *dega dega dega* on *what's happening around you*, bo no ta bai buska kousa. Anto e ora ei bo no sa pa kiko, ken bo tin ku bringa i kiko bo tin ku drecha. *You have to repair a few things.*

[They have to, no; first they have to become aware. You need to become aware of so many things in order to put your finger on it; what are the causes of the problems. Now, if you don't look for the causes of the problems and you keep digging digging digging on what's happening around you, you won't find the cause. And then you do not know why, whom you have to fight and what you have to fix. You have to repair a few things.]

According to Robles-Celestina, the reason behind many of the problems in education is not just the use of the language in education, but, precisely, the use of the two different orthographies in

the language. She blames the people who worked on standardizing Papiamentu for the split in Papiamentu. Instead of focusing on how to ratify use of the language, the focus was on trying to make a divide between Aruba and Curaçao through certain aspects beginning with language. Becoming aware of “causes of the problems” is the start to fixing the language. Once Papiamentu is standardized to the point where most people can agree on the proper use of syntax and the lexicon within the language, people might be more confident in implementing Papiamentu as the language of instruction.

Some of the participants thought that Dutch should have some type of role in the educational system (See Table 3 in Appendix). This notion was common because many expressed that although Papiamentu is a great language to know, knowing other languages would help them to be successful on the islands as well as elsewhere. Since tourism is a crucial part of the economy, it is pertinent to know at least English, Dutch, and Spanish; most of the tourists who go the islands annually speak those languages. Yrdja Silliee stated:

When you grow up and you would like to attend a college or university, most of our children will want to go abroad, whether it would be the United States or Holland. Therefore, they should have basic Dutch taught in school, Dutch or English, because you do not go far abroad with Papiamentu. [Interview with author, July 16, 2009]

Many students do further their education at the university level in the Netherlands or the United States. Not only will they have to be proficient for their university, they will also have to be adept in order to acclimate themselves easier in these countries.

Discussion

There are pros and cons to the debate as to whether Papiamentu should be the language of instruction in the educational system. Proponents argue that since Papiamentu is the mother tongue of a majority of the students that go to school, it would be easier for students to learn in

their own language. The most prominent argument against this is that if students are taught in Papiamentu, then they might not be able to succeed outside of their islands. Moreover, since there is a limited amount of opportunities on the islands, children will be left on there without employment. Although all these factors play a role in whether Papiamentu should become the language of instruction, only one consultant noted that Papiamentu should not have any role in the educational system.

One negative aspect of this belief that children will be hindered if they are taught in Papiamentu is that there is no full fluency in Papiamentu. While many people speak Papiamentu as their mother tongue, they cannot formulate a whole sentence without using additives from other languages such as Dutch and Spanish. This is due to the lack of Papiamentu usage in the educational system. Because there is a negative implication to learning Papiamentu entirely, it is not fully included in schools. Therefore, Papiamentu as a language suffers because the orthographic and syntactic rules are not properly enforced.

There is a perception that there should be some logical reason to know Papiamentu fully. The main argument against the use of Papiamentu in education is formulated around its lack of use outside of the islands. It is seen as having cultural significance, but otherwise as completely useless other than in daily communication. Opponents of its use in the educational system argue that languages such as Dutch have more value than Papiamentu because it is a more global language. What is interesting is that proponents of its use in the educational system express the opposite sentiments about the value of Dutch, arguing that there is no need to use Dutch outside of The Netherlands; because it is not a global language, as some opponents of Papiamentu purport. What is even more interesting is that many universities in The Netherlands use English to teach some disciplines. For instance, The Hague University offers eight Bachelor's degree

programs with an international focus that are taught entirely in English. This includes international business and management studies, international and European law, and international communication management. Since many students who leave Aruba and Curaçao go into these disciplines, they are often taught in English rather than Dutch. The only time they use Dutch is to communicate with others who live in Holland. In addition, this creates a prejudice towards the language. As can be seen by students who attend secondary school on the islands, there is a preference to speak English or Dutch as their primary language rather than to use Papiamentu. Is using Papiamentu seen as a sign of less intelligence due to this? Although, it would be suspected that many would say no, their views towards Papiamentu's significance in education of the islands suggest otherwise.

Another factor that plagues the islands is that there are high rates of repetition and dropouts in secondary education. In the 1970s, UNESCO conducted a study in Aruba and Curaçao that concluded that children should be taught in their primary language. Although their data were not conclusive, the report stated that having Papiamentu as the language of instruction would help to decrease these high rates. Despite that, about forty years later, Papiamentu is still seen as a hindrance to education rather a benefit. As these rates remain constant, there is a need to do something needs to be done to help lower these rates.

Jeff Siegal highlights a variety of studies that were conducted students learning in their own language. For instance, a study done by Mary Blake and Meta van Sickle on Gullah revealed that students were able to switch to Standard English easier and were to have greater academic success. Another study done by Keith Baker and Adriana de Kantor also reported the success of bilingual education. In their report, they stated that students were able to perform better in English and other subject areas. By having at least a bilingual program in Aruba and

Curaçao, students would be able to perform better in school and make easier transitions to languages such as Dutch.

Yet, there is also the problem that once students leave for Holland many do not return after they finish their studies. They often look for better opportunities elsewhere and if these are not found, they go back home as a last resort. This leaves Aruba and Curaçao with their brightest persons of this generation in other countries instead of coming back to make a positive impact on the islands. The results into a brain drain for both islands. A question remains: Is it better for these students to succeed in other countries or would it be plausible for them to return home and apply what they have learned abroad to their homelands? While many would surely want their children to have success regardless of their place of residence, Aruba and Curaçao still need their brightest students to help make a positive impact on the islands. In order to do this, Papiamentu needs to be in the forefront because it is perceived as one of the primary forces driving their culture. Because of this, Papiamentu needs to play a positive role in education because its usage makes it easier to learn other languages, such as Dutch, and it helps to strengthen the identity of the student.

CHAPTER FIVE: PAPIAMENTU IN THE MEDIA

Introduction

The media has always been a viable source of news on the islands and in the rest of the world and has also been used to give voice to the people. Language has been an influential asset for the media. In Aruba and Curaçao, Papiamentu has been used in all facets of the media. For instance, almost all newspapers in both Aruba and Curaçao are published in Papiamentu. There are just a few newspapers that are available in Dutch, English, or Spanish. The newspapers that are written in Spanish cater to the growing Hispanic communities in Aruba and Curaçao. The English newspaper in Aruba accommodates to the tourists who come largely from the United States. The Dutch newspapers, such as *Amigoe*, are well established newspapers on the islands since Dutch has been the sole official language of Aruba and Curaçao since they were first colonized by the Dutch in the 1600s until the mid 2000s.

In contrast to newspapers, television in Aruba and Curaçao used Papiamentu since they first went on air in the 1960s. In Aruba, there are two local television channels, *ATV* and *TeleAruba*. The local news, programs, and events that happen on the island are all reported in Papiamentu. When a local program is not on-air, *TeleAruba* switches to CNN from Latin America and uses its programs. *ATV* is an affiliate of NBC and airs many of its programs when local programs aren't being broadcasted. Curaçao is similar to Aruba in that it has its own television channel. *TeleCuraçao*, which launched before *TeleAruba*, also provides local programming, news, and airing of local events. It also provides programming from international channels as well such as *BVN*, a Dutch television network.

There are radio stations in Aruba and Curaçao that also broadcast in Papiamentu. Most of the stations usually play a variety of music from Latin America, the United States, Holland, and from the islands. Although they play a wide variety of music, the music programs and talk shows themselves are broadcasted in Papiamentu. In Aruba there are radio stations that are Spanish language based such as *Radio Revolucion* and American radio programs such as the “Top Hits” program hosted by Ryan Seacrest every week. Curaçao also has radio stations that cater to their international guests. For instance, there are stations that air programs completely in Dutch.

Usage in the Media

Although Papiamentu is generally used in the media, there are various opinions about how much Papiamentu is used. As mentioned before, there is a variety of media outlets that use different languages. The general perceptions about the importance of the use of Papiamentu in general mirrored what participants thought about its usage in the media. According to Shendell Reed:

Well actually here in Curaçao it's used a lot. Here, in newspapers, on the news, the local news. They are using it a lot. We have five different types of newspapers, three in the morning and two in the evening and we also have two Dutch newspapers. So we have five local newspapers, which everything is written in Papiamentu. For example, national news is translated in Papiamentu. So we have yes, three in the morning and two in the evening. So for a tiny island like this, it's a lot. Of course we have our local news station, which is *Teleocho (TeleCuraçao)*. We also have from Aruba, *TeleAruba* and *TeleBonaire* (from Bonaire) and they are all in Papiamentu. [Interview with author, July 15, 2009]

Like Shendell Reed, there were quite a few of consultants in Aruba and Curaçao who thought the islands had a sufficient number of newspapers. Although there were variations in opinions on whether the media was fluent enough in the standard Papiamentu, almost all noted that it was an

accomplishment to have more than one newspaper written solely in Papiamentu. This opinion can be attributed generally to Papiamentu versus Dutch historically. *TeleCuraçao*, which was the first television channel to broadcast primarily in Papiamentu, came during the cultural rebirth in 1960 on the islands. Three years later, Aruba launched its own television channel that also aired principally in Papiamentu. At the time, the most prominent newspaper, *Amigoe* was still written in Dutch. There was a push during this era to revive the culture in Aruba and Curaçao and Papiamentu was in the forefront. Through the media, newscasters and disc jockeys could show their national pride by speaking in their mother tongue.

Radio has always been a medium for Papiamentu. Since many of the radio programs catered to the local population, Papiamentu was primarily used. By using the language, it helped to reaffirm the cultural identity of the locals. Radio, like television and newspapers, also catered to the many immigrants living in Aruba and Curaçao. While locals acknowledge and accept the use of other languages such as Spanish in the media, they note that there is a clear influence of other cultures in Aruba and Curaçao. Sandra Robles-Celestina noted:

“Radio, televishon; tin *par’i* kanal pero masha tiki. Paso ora e *local programming* kaba nan ta suich over pa e NBC, *bijvoorbeeld* ATV. E tin e NBC logo *dus* e media ta e master di e kanal.

[Radio, television; there are some channels but they are very few. Because, when the local programming finishes, they switch over to NBC, for example *ATV*. It has the NBC logo, so the media is the boss of the channel.][Interview with author, August 8, 2009]

Although channels like *ATV* are local, *ATV* still primarily airs American shows. Newspapers, like television, also undergo the influence of other languages. Historically, since Dutch was the primary language of newspapers, there were always lexical borrowings of the language in the newspaper. Recently, Spanish has become a more influential language. For instance, Theodoor de Jongh notes:

Mi ta mira tin sierto korant ku ta dediká sekshon na spañó ku mi no ta haña ku mester. Òf bo ta bin ku korant ful na spañó òf bo ta bisa no sòri pero nos ta bin ku korant na Papiamentu paso nos kier esunnan ku ta *habla española* siña lesa Papiamentu. Ya mi ta komprondé korantnan ta bende nan ke bende. Ke men si nan ta mira un *afzetmarkt* pa merkado na spañó, *vooral e spaans sprekende* imigrantenan mi ta kere ku ya nan tin nan derecho pa *hasi'ele* pero e no mester bai den *cost* di nos Papiamentu si.

[I see that there are certain newspapers that dedicate sections in Spanish that I don't think they have to do. You either have a newspaper fully in Spanish or you tell them sorry, we are going to come with a newspaper in Papiamentu because we want the ones that speak Spanish as their mother tongue to learn to read Papiamentu. Okay, I understand that newspapers just want to sell. Meaning, if I see a Latin market, especially among the Spanish speaking immigrants, they have a right to do it but it does not have to be at the cost of our Papiamentu.][Interview with author, August 5, 2009]

Since Spanish is closely related to Papiamentu, having select articles written in Spanish might have some negative consequences for Papiamentu. For instance, according to the census bureau in Aruba, in 2008, 35 percent of the population was foreign-born compared to the 65 percent born on the island. These numbers of foreign-born have been steadily increasing since 2003. These might not be staggering numbers in the United States, but for a small island of a population of only 105,844 (2008), this could be detrimental to cultural aspects, such as language. As de Jongh and other consultants in Aruba and Curaçao noted, many newspaper articles that are written in Papiamentu increasingly include lexical borrowings from Spanish. While this might not have immediate effects, over time, it can have a negative effect on the lexicon and syntax of Papiamentu. While Papiamentu has changed over time, there has never been such an increase of lexical borrowings from other languages for words that are present in Papiamentu as there is presently. Many people in Aruba and Curaçao realize that Papiamentu cannot be static but they also realize that without the proper usage of lexicon and syntax, Papiamentu can weaken as a language.

Nivel: The Fluency Factor

Nivel, literally meaning level, is the word that can refer to how fluent someone is in a language. In terms of the media, nivel was an important factor in how Papiamentu was used. For instance, newspapers were expected to have a higher nivel in contrast to a magazine. Since newspapers are more credible sources than magazines, people focused more on the errors found in newspapers than they would in a magazine. Many journalists took classes in Papiamentu to learn how to correctly use the syntax and lexicon of the standard orthographies.

Television was similar, depending upon the program. For instance, the news was expected to be at a higher nivel than a video program that was run by teenagers. Newscasters were expected to be fluent in the correct usage of both the syntax and lexicon of Papiamentu. Like television, radio was expected to be at a certain level depending upon the program. For instance, a certain level was expected of news programs and talk programs since these programs informed the public on important issues such as politics and education. Because some programs, such as music shows, focused more on entertainment rather than information, they were not expected to be at a high nivel at all.

Many of the study participants expressed various opinions about whether the media used the standard form of Papiamentu. Newspapers were considered to be the medium that contained the most errors. This could be attributed to the problems associated with writing the standard forms of Papiamentu. In both Aruba and Curaçao, many of the consultants noted that newspapers on both islands had issues with using the correct orthography in writing. Even though there were various consultants who noted errors, some noted the improvement from previous years because of spell check and language classes. For instance, Cenika Daal noted:

Aworakí, ku korant *vooral*, ku *spelling* chèk asina, e la bai hopi dilanti. Paso hopi biaha mi mes tabata sinta lesa bisa *hmm*; *bo 'n* ta komprondé kiko nan ta skibi pero si mester ta *eerlijk*, e a bai hopi dilanti.

[Now, especially with the newspaper, with spelling check, it improved a lot. Because many times, I would sit and read and say *hmm*; you could not understand what they were writing but if I have to be honest, it improved a lot.][Interview with author, July 15, 2009]

Before a spell check software was made available for the Curaçaoan orthography, it was difficult to remember precisely which words were correctly spelled with the accent marks. Since many journalists had to go back to school to learn how to write using the correct orthography, many of them felt this was a hassle. Editors had to proofread all articles based on what they thought the correct syntax and orthography was. Because everyone had their own views on what was correct, this led to occurrences of different spellings of lexicon in major newspapers. When asked about the fluency of Papiamentu in newspapers, Deya Mensche noted:

Good, because they made such fools of themselves that they went to Papiamentu class. Look in my opinion, to answer your question; the mastery of Papiamentu verbally is good, written not. When you learn how to write Papiamentu, when you open a newspaper you can tell who could write Papiamentu and who couldn't. And a few years ago, newspapers sent their journalists to class, to courses of Papiamentu to learn how to write it because a lot of people were doing whatever they wanted and it's phonetic; the press writes phonetic Papiamentu. So *extra*, yet they write *èkstra* with a <ks>. Yet the newspaper is called *Extra* with an <x>. So I don't know where the consistency is happening. I don't know. Don't you think that's foolish; you write *èkstra* with a <ks> and your newspaper is called *Extra* with an <x>? [Interview with author, July 14, 2009]

Spelling errors, for instance between *extra* and *èkstra*, are classic mistakes that can often go unnoticed. But the public might deem it as confusing since newspapers are supposed to be the medium for the standard orthography. A consultant noted:

Ami ta kere, nan por *rafiné* un tiki mas. Si, tin biaha nan ta bisa kos hopi, òf lagami dunabu un otro *voorbeeld*. Bo ta wak den korant ta skibí “ta bende sapatu pa mucha pretu” logá di “ta bende sapatu pretu pa mucha”. *Dus*, sierto kosnan asina nan mester drecha mi ta haña.

[I think they could refine it a little more. Yes, sometimes they say, or let me give you an example. You see in the newspaper they write “we sell shoes for black children” instead

of “we sell black shoes for children”. So, I think certain things like that they have to fix.] [Interview with author, August 11, 2009]

Syntax errors can also prove to be detrimental when found in a newspaper. For instance, in the quote above, knowing the proper placement of the adjective *pretu* behind the object that it was describing rather than behind the subject *mucha* would have helped readers to understand the message. Instead, readers, such as my consultant, were trying to determine whether the business only sold shoes for black children or whether they were selling black shoes. Some participants gave reasons as to why these errors might be common. In another interview, Sandra Robles-Celestina stated:

Korantnan ta na Papiamentu pero e layout ta wòrdu hasi hopi di dor di latino anto e Papiamentu no ta korekto. Mi kasá ta duna lès di Papiamentu de bes en kuando i e ta haña ku e level ta *bezig* ta drop. *Dus* e level ku mi ta tabata tin, ku nos mamanan tabata tin ta *bezig* ta drop.

[Newspapers are in Papiamentu but the layout is done through Hispanics and the Papiamentu isn't correct. My husband gives lessons in Papiamentu sometimes and he thinks the level is dropping. So the level that I had, that our parents had is dropping.][Interview with author, August 8, 2009]

Theodoor de Jongh also expressed similar sentiments. He noted:

E nivel, ta mi ta kere e ta basta bon. Por ehèmpel, si bo ko'i Diario dor di Jossy, Jossy tabata un di e ferviente *siguidornan* di e *stroming* wòrdu skibí etimológiko. Esei semper tabata su deseo. E a skibi vários buki, *woordenboeknan*. Hopi di e otro korantnan ta *look up* kon Diario ta skibi i dor di esei e nivel ta basta bon. Bo ta ripara mes ora ku algu sali ora ku un *nieuw* lenga ta wòrdu skibi, bo ta ripara e forma di skibi hopi biaha. Si e ta un hende ku ta di *habla española*, su papiamentu, bo ta ripara ku tin hopi palabra spañó, hopi palabra hulandes, hopi palabra ingles. Pero ya bo ta haña hende di diferente nashonalidat ku ta skibi artíkulonan ku ta hasi kos ei. E ta keda na un korant òf un media si ora un hende ta skibi algu, si nan ta eksigí si e ta bon òf no. Wak, si e persona kier skibi algu ya e no por papia papiamentu, bon, ki bo ta bai hasi? Bisé, “no bo no por skibi den mi korant”. Tampoko no ta bon.

[I think the level is pretty good. For example, if you take Diario from Jossy²⁵, Jossy was one of the fervent followers of the etymological spelling. That was always his desire. He wrote various books; dictionaries. A lot of the other newspapers look up how Diaro writes and through that, the level is pretty good. You realize right away when something comes out when a new language is being written, you realize the form of writing a lot of

²⁵ Jossy Mansur is one of the people that established the etymological orthography in Aruba. He also wrote the present dictionary for Aruba as well as Papiamento-English dictionary. (Mansur 1991)

the time. If it is someone that their mother tongue is Spanish, in their Papiamentu you notice that there are many Spanish words, many Dutch words, and many English words. But, you find that there are different nationalities that write articles that do that. It becomes the fault of the newspaper if someone writes something and they don't make sure that it is good or not. Look, if the person wants to write something and they can't speak Papiamentu, what are you going to do? Tell them, "No, you cannot write in my newspaper". That is not nice either.][Interview with author, August 5, 2009]

There are local journalists who create spelling and syntax errors as well. As Theodoor de Jongh noted, it would be unfair to not let these journalists write articles. But what is the solution?

Does permitting them write to according to their own style come at the expense of Papiamentu's syntax and orthography? Some consultants noted that it should be a requirement for journalists to attend classes on Papiamentu and that those grammatical rules and regulations that were taught should be enforced.

While it is easier to track errors in the newspapers, it was harder to do so for television and radio. Many of the errors that the participants noted on television and radio dealt with slang Papiamentu versus standard Papiamentu. According to Ashanti Benjamin:

On TV, *e ta dependé* (it depends on) the program because if you get the *telenotisia* (news), the level is higher than a Video Zoo, something with video clips where you get teenagers who are presenting the show. You see that the level is lower when you see it on TV with the *telenotisia* (news). But about the radio stations, I think by speaking Papiamentu on the radio you have to dominate it very well because it's nice to hear someone speak Papiamentu well. But you don't get that every time because you have a lot of younger people on the radio right now, so they have the same slang, with the *onix*. The level is not very high; and when you get older people on the radio, you can hear the difference. [Interview with author on July 16, 2009]

Many of the participants noted that there was an expectation of a certain level of professionalism from newscasters and radio broadcasters. The dichotomy between programming for different audiences really sets apart what is deemed as professional versus unprofessional. The market for talk radio programs and television news is geared towards an older generation, while programs such as *Video Zoo* are geared towards teenagers. In the latter audience, the use of slang would be

considered appropriate since it is the common language of the youth. For newscasters and talk show hosts it would be considered inappropriate, since their broadcasts are intended to be more serious in nature. Still, some consultants noted that even some newscasters tend to use slang at times. When asked what can be done to correct these certain errors, one participant stated “Probably require the newscasters to attend some form of a course or like a seminar to further broaden their Papiamentu knowledge (interview with author, August 10, 2009). They use a lot of slang, even on TV. Papiamentu has a lot of slang but it is not appropriate for news broadcasters; even in the radio.” Some consultants noted that there was a need to educate newscasters as well as the public on syntax and orthography rules in Papiamentu. Edna Hooi-Béréños offers another example:

In the media they don’t really know how to speak or write, not all of them, but most of them. They just don’t know. And even when they speak like I say in Papiamentu, “I put the thing there”, “*ma pone ei*”. I don’t know where they come with the thing, but most of them you hear them talking and they say “I put the thing”, “*ma pone kos einan*”. It’s a form of plural, so I don’t know what it does there. And then you have another thing that makes it worse than that, I put it *einanan*. I don’t know where it comes from. It’s just I put it *ei*, *ma pone ei*. And that’s what’s happening that no one understands. I don’t know what that is. For me it looks like slang. And that’s one of the many mistakes they make and that’s the media. And that’s the Papiamentu newspapers and the radio and people listen to that and they take it over. So I don’t know what they make from this language really. [Interview with author, July 16, 2009]

Newscasters are often expected to use correct Papiamentu since they are medium that the general public looks to for standard Papiamentu.

The Media as a Medium to Educate

The media is not only seen as a way to inform the public on world events but also as a vehicle to educate them about local culture as well. Through talk shows and various television programs, people can be educated on a variety of topics. For instance, some of the current

programs include a focus on cultural history, good health habits, and how to cook the local cuisine of Aruba and Curaçao.

As Edna Hooi-Béréños stated previously, the general public will adopt the speech patterns of the media because the media is seen as setting a proper example of where standard Papiamentu should be used. The practice of doubling the plural marker *-nan* to create *einanan* is widespread among the general public, although some people considered this incorrect. The problem that persists is that most adults did not receive Papiamentu classes in school. When asked what could be done about educating the masses on standard Papiamentu, Hooi-Béréños noted:

Go to the television, that's the best medium. It reaches everybody. And go every day, say three times a week, come with these things and talk about them openly and say what Papiamentu really is; it's not that thing²⁶. Use the television. Many people don't like to read; they don't use the newspaper. But I think television reaches more people. So I think television is the best way.

Although illiteracy is uncommon in Aruba and Curaçao, newspapers might not necessarily be read by all. A television program that specifically focuses on the correct syntax and orthography can help to elevate writing and speech styles of many Papiamentu speakers in Aruba and Curaçao.

Discussion

Since Papiamentu is the mother tongue of the people of Aruba and Curaçao, it has been the language of the media since radio and television got their start. It is a vehicle that could connect both islands regardless of status. As a young language, the media serves as the best outlet to exemplify the standard Papiamentu. Everyone uses the media in some form or another, so it reaches a wide spectrum. It is understandable that certain programs that are geared towards

²⁶ This was in reference to the *einanan*.

entertainment prefer to use the common slang of the youth, but there has to be a balance where the standard forms of Papiamentu should be exposed. Since, there are two standard forms of Papiamentu, newscasters, journalists, and radio talk show hosts should begin by using these forms in programs such as news programs.

The use of Papiamentu in newspapers has undoubtedly improved since its initial use. Historically, Papiamentu was used in the media, but when Dutch became the prevalent language for education and all things official, Papiamentu was rarely used in newspapers. Presently, one of the most well established newspapers, *Amigoe*, is still written completely in Dutch²⁷. This presents a conflict between trying to instill both standard forms of Papiamentu, the etymological form in Aruba and the phonological form in Curaçao, and presenting Dutch as the prevailing official language. Although it is just one of the established newspapers in Aruba and Curaçao, it shows a lack of deference towards Papiamentu by not having any articles written in the mother tongue.

Other newspapers have improved in their use of Papiamentu, such as *Diario*, *Extra*, and *La Prensa*. While some journalists still write according to their own standards, the nivel of Papiamentu has improved dramatically. In order to achieve success in implementing the standard orthographies among the general public many consultants noted that grammar and orthography rules should apply to journalists and should be enforced.

One point that was emphasized was that Papiamentu should be properly used on the radio, especially in talk and news programs. Regarding talk shows, one consultant noted that some calls should be screened due to their offensive nature. While this does not necessarily apply to syntax and orthography rules, it does present a point of correct usage. Radio personalities should be able to correct errors when callers call the shows.

²⁷ There are English translations on their website; there are no Papiamentu articles.

The use of Papiamentu in the media can help to educate the masses and implement the standard orthographies of both Aruba and Curaçao. Since there are generational differences in learning Papiamentu; this might help to eradicate the different spellings of many words in the lexicon. Older generations might be set in their ways, but at least they will be able to use the media to observe the correct usage of Papiamentu.

CONCLUSION

Papiamentu has existed since the 1700s and will continue to develop and expand as new influences and immigrants come to Aruba and Curaçao. These influences will affect the perception towards its official status on the islands. Various opinions towards the language have always played a role in how it has developed over the years. Historically, these opinions have helped to keep Papiamentu out of the educational system until recently. With its growth, from being a creole language with no orthography to producing two standard orthographies, over the years, the perception towards Papiamentu is changing from a negative to a positive one.

Politically, Papiamentu is still divided by the two orthographies from Aruba and Curaçao. Presently, the issue of two different orthographies does not pose a problem since each is incorporated into the daily lives of the people on both Aruba and Curaçao, the etymological orthography in Aruba and the phonological orthography in Curaçao. While it might not pose specific problems now, there might be an even bigger divide in the future. For instance, as Aruba's relationship with Latin America, in terms of culture, grows, the amount of lexical borrowings from Spanish increases. This is made even more evident by the influx of Latin American immigrants who choose not to speak Papiamentu but instead decide to speak Spanish.

Perhaps if a uniform orthography was chosen for Papiamentu, issues concerning the standardization of both orthographies might not be such a big issue. One of the major themes that were prevalent throughout the interviews was the issue of standardization. Although, both orthographies are standardized, many people had concerns about how certain words were spelled. For instance, should the word *find* be spelled *hanja* or *haña*? These issues still resonated within locals and especially within the older generations. If a person has always spelled the word *find*, *hanja*, why should be considered incorrect? Is it incorrect because

scholars and political figures who worked on Papiamentu find *haña* more elegant? These questions continue to linger as Papiamentu continues to be transformed. Linguists on both islands are continuously working on the standardize forms of both Papiamentu orthographies to make them credible enough to be considered in all facets of society, such as education.

Another issue that negatively affects Papiamentu is the use of syntax. While there are grammatical rules for Papiamentu that everyone generally follows, these rules are not strictly enforced. Presently, the focus relies heavily on the orthography while syntax becomes an afterthought. In order to fully incorporate Papiamentu within the educational system, it has to have a standardize form for both the orthography and the syntax.

Based on the analysis of responses from this limited research sample, I conclude that, the survival of Papiamentu will be based on the perception of its status in all facets of the society, especially education. The educational system is the root to implementing the standardized forms of Papiamentu within the youth. If Papiamentu can be seen as a positive asset to gaining success, the language will not just continue to thrive but it will also be able to shed its negative image of being a language with no real importance.

There are two key components that will help to affect Papiamentu use positively. The first is to have a strong presence in the educational system. Many consultants noted that Papiamentu usage will continue to improve if it is done right in schools. For instance, Cindy Martinus stated (interview with author, August 10, 2009), “Si nan kumins’é dun’é na skol mané mester, ta mi ta kere lo ta hopi mas mehor paso e ora ei nos ta papi’é bon i tambe *skibié’le* na manera korekto e ta *suppose* di ta.” (If they begin to teach it in school like it is supposed to be, I think it will be better because that way we can speak it well and write it correctly like it’s supposed to be.) By implementing it in schools, children are learning the standard way to write

and speak their language. This is a major improvement because it will help to regulate the official standardized language for generations to come.

Presently, Papiamentu is being written more than ever before. The biggest venue for written Papiamentu is within cyberculture. More than ever children and young adults use email, MSN messenger and Blackberry Messenger, or BBM, as a way to communicate with their friends. Until recently, there was no real need to write Papiamentu other than to write a letter to a friend. Through the use of technology, young adults and children were obligated to figure out how to spell and write the syntax of Papiamentu. While they might not follow the specific guidelines on how to correctly write the lexicon or syntax, they still are using written Papiamentu more often than their parents' generation. What is even more interesting is that they also are starting to use shorthand for writing phrases and words. For instance, *ktk* would be used instead of *kiko ta kiko* (what's up). Another example is the use of *sve* instead of *suave* (cool). By using these abbreviations, it is showing that this generation is becoming more aware of their written Papiamentu. The use of cyberculture will be a dynamic avenue because it is starting to dictate how the people think Papiamentu should be written.

The second component is to continue to create avenues for its advancement. For instance, when consultants were asked about the development of Papiamentu ten years from now, many of them remarked about the people who continue to fight to maintain Papiamentu and to make more materials available in Papiamentu. For instance, celebrated singer Elia Isenia noted:

Si mandatarionan no pone pia bou pa esun di Papiamentu; ku nan no ta kere den dje, aki dies aña, mi no sa unda e ta bai; duele. Mi duele pasombra e duele ta rabia. Bo sa di kon? Paso ma pasa den e kos ku nan ta pasando den dje aworakí. Ku ta bringa Papiamentu, anto ma kere ku e ko'i ei a kaba. Ke men ainda bo ta tende bomba ta bati e idioma ku nos stima; nan ta hasié nan katibu, nan esklabo. Si nos ke p'e Papiamentu keda stándart, mané bo ta bis'é, drenta den vokabulario di hóben, di mucha chikitunan.

Pero mi ta kere ku dor ku nos tin siman di kultura, aña di kultura²⁸, mucha ta tende hopi kos di Papiamentu, anto e chikitunan ki, ta nan nos tin ku yuda paso ta nan ta bai trese e kòki bek. Ma e hende grandinan eifó, ku e muchanan di binti aña ku bintitres, bintikuater aña; kabes duru duru, nan no sa nada nada. Einan nos ta morto. E mucha chikitunan ku ta bini ki, kuater aña, shete, ocho, nueve aña; nan ei ta bai hasié bek.

[If the elected officials don't put their foot down for Papiamentu; that they don't believe in it, in ten years, I don't know where it will be; it's a shame. It is my shame because the shame is anger. You want to know why? Because I passed through what they are passing through right now. Fighting for Papiamentu and I thought that was done with. Meaning, still you hear the overseer beating the language that we love; they make it their slave, their slave. If we want Papiamentu to stay the standard, like you say, put it in the vocabulary of the youth, the little children. But I think because we have a week of culture, year of culture, children are hearing a lot about the things of Papiamentu, and the little ones; they are the ones we have to help because they are going to bring it back. The older people out there, the kids that are 20 years old, 23, 24 years old; they have a hard head, they don't know anything. There we are dead. The little children, four years old, seven, eight, nine years old; they are going to bring it back.][Interview with author, July 20, 2009]

During this “year of culture,” a specific focus was placed on the history of Curaçao and

Papiamentu. Many young children were able to benefit by learning about their own culture and specifically their mother tongue. Positive attitudes about this language are also starting to prevail. Deva-dee Siliee noted:

I think Papiamentu has a lot of potential like I said and it is going to continue to transform as people come back as the island itself transforms. I think it's going to continue to play a major role in our daily lives and perhaps even a bigger role. Look at Izaline Calister; she just won an Edison award²⁹ in Europe while she sings in a language in Europe that nobody understands. So she's breaking down barriers and sort of borders. And I hope that since Papiamentu's sort of standardized, students are able to use Papiamentu in their professional careers, in their education. But even if they do decide to go abroad they still hold on to it; like I speak to my mom in Papiamentu. She speaks Dutch and English, I choose to speak to her in Papiamentu. I live with two people from Curaçao here (New York City). We all speak English outside of the house, but when we are at home we speak Papiamentu. Because, it feels natural, it feels great. It's part of who we are; it's what we share as Curaçaoans. So I think that it's going to continue to play, perhaps a larger role in people's lives no matter where they are. [Interview with author, November 28, 2009]

²⁸ 2009 was considered the year of culture for Curaçao.

²⁹ The Edison Award in Holland is equivalent to the Grammys in the United States

By continuing to fight to implement the standard versions of Papiamentu in all of the educational system as well as in all facets on the islands, Papiamentu will continue to thrive and improve for many years to come.

APPENDIX

Table 1

	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	ARUBA	CURAÇAO	18-50	51-81
MALE	10	5	5	8	2
FEMALE	22	10	12	13	9
TOTAL	32	15	17	21	11

Table 2

ETYMOLOGICAL SPELLING	PHONOLOGICAL SPELLING
cas	kas
computer	kòmputer
traducion	tradukshon
trabao	trabou
palo	palu
exito	éksito
oficina	ofisina
accidente	aksidente
inscripcion	inskripshon
scol	skol

Table 3

	DUTCH SHOULD BE THE LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION	DUTCH SHOULD HAVE SOME ROLE IN EDUCATION	PAPIAMENTU SHOULD HAVE SOME ROLE IN EDUCATION
PERCENTAGE OF PARTICIPANTS	38%	59%	97%

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